THE BIBLE AND THINGS TO COME

DAVID FREEMAN

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and
Things to Come

By
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TO THE MEMORY
of
My former teacher and friend, the
Rev. Professor J. Gresham Machen, D.D., Litt.D.
Reformer, Scholar, Defender, and
Expositor of God's Word

PREFACE

The following series of sermons was originally prepared for the benefit of and preached in substantially their present form to my congregation of the New Covenant Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. Underlying each discourse is the acceptance of the Bible as the inspired and inerrant Word of God.

The theme is that of the "last things" as taught in the Bible upon which in these days there is much controversy among Christian people. There needs to be brought to light the plain teaching of Scripture, which in these matters as well as in all matters of faith and life is the only infallible rule.

The view set forth of the Lord's return and the end of the world is not by any means novel. We believe that from its generic standpoint it is the view embodied in our classic Reformed confessions. It is claimed that it is none other than the view of the Bible itself. It is for the reader to judge of its Scriptural soundness.

I desire gratefully to acknowledge the light and help received from the classroom instruction and writings of my former teacher, the Rev. Professor Geerhardus Vos, Ph.D., professor emeritus of Biblical Theology in Princeton Theological Seminary. His book, *The Pauline Eschatology*, has been invaluable in the preparation of these sermons. For a long time I have felt that the wealth of Biblical scholarship it contains should be passed on, even if only in broad outline, to those unable to enter into its technical theological discussion.

It is earnestly hoped that this book may serve to promote a better understanding of salvation and its blessed consummation in the glorious appearing of the great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

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INTRODUCTION

We appear in these times compelled to undertake a more specialized study of the subject of eschatology. This is so particularly for two reasons:

1. In certain quarters there is exhibited a very lively interest in this phase of theological study. Lively interest, if wholesome, should always be welcome. But this revival of interest too often expresses itself in certain kinds of unwholesome curiosity. Corresponding to this curiosity there is an abundance of pretense to information on the topic in question, and many professing Christians are too ready to satisfy their curiosity by accepting the vagaries of the would-be seer who professes to be able to disclose to us some of the mysteries of the future.

The custodian and interpreter of that Word, which is a light shining in a dark place until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts, cannot refrain from inquiring what Scripture has to say, so that he may know and teach what, to say the least, are the limits of our knowledge, and that he may set forth the framework of divine revelation. He must defend himself and others against the vagaries of exegesis as well as of speculation.

2. While on the one hand we are afflicted with distinct error and perilous extreme, we are on the other, and probably to a greater extent, in danger of losing our eschatological sense and outlook altogether under the impact of a secularizing and materialistic philosophy. Naturally, such a frame of mind is not hospitable to eschatological emphasis. Its plea is, "Let us do our

utmost for the world that now is, and the world to come, if there be any, will take care of itself."

It is true that Christianity does not depreciate the world that now is. That form of piety which conceives of the life of faith as consisting in mystical isolation from the life of this present world and as incompatible with devotion to the ordinary and most menial tasks of life is not the piety of the Christian Faith. Indeed, it is one of the most subtle forms of Satanic deceit and one of the most effective ways of bringing reproach upon the cause of the gospel. It is the Apostle Paul who commands us to separate ourselves from every brother who walks disorderly, and the peculiar brand of disorderliness he has in mind is that of working not at all. He says in another place, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." The Christian does what his hands find to do with his might; he is diligent in business serving the Lord.

Nevertheless, his citizenship is in heaven. His diligence in the earthly vocation is indeed determined for him by the fact that he is a citizen of the heavenly country. The latter throws a halo of dignity around the most humble vocation. It is viewed by him in the perspective of never-ending issues. It is the Lord's work, and he serves the Lord Christ. One day he must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and he is therefore careful to discharge his earthly stewardship with conscientious devotion.

On deeper investigation we shall find that both attitudes, the first that of curious prying into the unrevealed and even the forbidden, the second that of apathy to and disdain for the eschatological, are symptoms of the same malady—ignorance of, or departure from, the

contents and limits of divine revelation. In the face of both—curious fanaticism and secularistic worldliness—we must as Christians be constantly refreshing ourselves at the streams of heavenly and heaven-revealed truth. The eschatological is not at the periphery of Christian faith. It is woven into the warp and woof of God-fearing belief and of godly living.

The most characteristic thing that may be said of the Christian is that he is a redeemed person. As such he is waiting for the consummation of that redemption. We "ourselves also," said Paul, "which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." The believer, therefore, has an all-controlling interest in the glorious appearing of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for crystallized in that appearing is every phase of the full attainment of the goal ordained for him in the eternal counsel, and secured to him through the finished work of Christ. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." How could the exercised Christian fail to long for the vision and presence of his Savior and Lord? It is then that every shackle of sin-caused restraint will be finally broken and every cloud of sin-caused ignorance finally dispelled. It is then that the last enemy will have been destroyed. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

This is not only true in the individual sphere. It is also true in the collective aspect of the believer's life and hope. He is part of a great organism—the body of Christ. He thinks not only of the consummation of his own individual salvation, but of the completion

and perfection of the whole body of the elect, and of the kingdom of God as destined to bring everything into subjugation to itself when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. The goal of the believer is the glory of God, and then will finally be vindicated the justice of God and made manifest the exceeding riches of His grace and manifold wisdom.

There are many ways in which the stream of apostolic life has been diverted from its original purity, but none is more conspicuous than the lapse from eschatological expectation. The early church had an intense preoccupation with the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ. We need to regain the vantage point of that expectancy. Might we also be in a humble way the instruments in restoring to some extent that perspective to theology and to Christian outlook?

If this is to be done, it is not, however, through indifference to the context in which the central theme of eschatological hope finds a place. When the blessed hope is placed in a non-scriptural or unscriptural context, then it ceases to be the blessed hope of the New Testament. It is just here that divergence frequently enters. The fact of Christ's glorious appearing may not be denied, but the context in which it is placed is often so distorted by alien elements that the meaning of the fact itself is largely obscured.

It is the purpose of these sermons to set forth the truth and significance of the glorious appearing of the Lord, to place that appearing in its proper setting, and to remove from popular misapprehension some of the accretions and distortions that have served to pollute the Christian hope. These sermons merit careful read-

ing and study. We hope they may be instrumental in promoting and diffusing the generic standpoint and type of piety they represent. This is our desire, because we believe they set forth the Biblical doctrine of our Lord's return and of the end of the world.

In writing this introduction, we could not be expected to endorse every detail of exegesis or of standpoint. We know of no book composed by man to which we could yield such endorsement. There is only one book to which in all its extent and detail we pledge our faith. That book is the Bible, the Word of God. Nevertheless, as sermons that breathe the atmosphere of Scriptural devotion and exhibitive of sane and edifying exposition, we hope they may be read by many to the removal of widespread misunderstanding, to the engendering and strengthening of faith, and above all, to the glory of God.

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I

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST AND SALVATION

Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.
ACTS 1:11

NO ONE knows what will happen in the future. Such knowledge lies beyond the attainment of the human mind and is far removed from the vision of every man. But God does know the future. The only way in which we can know the future is for God to make it known to us.

Will Christ come again? Who knows? Across the pages of the Bible there is to be found an answer. Unmistakably and with remarkable clearness there is to be found the doctrine that Jesus Christ will again appear to the view of this world. This doctrine is woven profusely into the fabric of the New Testament teaching and it appears that it engaged the heart and mind of the primitive Christian church. This teaching forms, as we shall see, an integral part of the Christian faith.

It is almost needless to say that the future coming of Christ is not to be confused, or identified, with

what the New Testament speaks of as the inward coming of Christ to those who believe in Him. Jesus said to His disciples, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my father will love him, and we will *come unto him*, and make our abode with him" (John 14: 23). Whenever God manifests Himself in a spiritual way to the world or to individuals it is, to be sure, a "coming" of Him, but this is not what is meant at all by the Scriptures when they refer properly to the future *coming*.

Neither can this coming of Christ be identified with the death of the Christian. Only gross ignorance of the New Testament or a flagrant distortion of its meaning can make it mean this. The very words that the New Testament uses in relation to this teaching make it plain that what it means by them is *the personal and visible coming again of the Lord Jesus from heaven.* The text I have chosen makes this very evident. The angels said to the upward-gazing disciples, "This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1: 11).

There is no room for doubt upon this great doctrine on the part of those who believe the Bible. The Word of God is a plain and open book and what we are concerned with now is its teaching on this doctrine.

There is one word in the New Testament that perhaps some have not heard before. It may sound new, but it is worth while for all of us to get acquainted with it. Of course, it is not in your English Bibles but it is there in the Greek. It is the word *parousia.* This is the word that is translated *coming* in connection with the reappearing of Christ to this world. Try to bear this word in mind. When you think of the coming of Christ, think of the word *parousia.*

We shall be amazed to find with what clearness the New Testament sets forth the *parousia* of the Lord Jesus Christ. After looking at the evidence, our minds should be more than impressed with the weight this doctrine had in the minds of the inspired writers of Holy Writ.

As this doctrine interests us, so it concerned the disciples of Jesus. They came to Him one day as He sat upon the Mount of Olives and asked Him this question: "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt. 24: 3). To this question He gave an extended and lengthy reply, which is found in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew. We shall not go into this reply now, but this much is certain, He did not deny that He would come again. He said, "As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (vs. 37).

The Apostle Paul, in giving hope to the Corinthian Christians, who were wondering about the future of those whom they had laid in the grave, declared with a note of triumph that when Christ comes, those who belong to Christ will be raised from the dead (see I Cor. 15:23). What a glorious hope this is to all believers who mourn the loss of loved ones! In another place the Apostle's rejoicing is at its height when he is given to the contemplation of this theme. He and all his converts will stand in the presence of the Lord who died to save them. Then they will all stand blameless before God (I Thess. 2: 19; 3: 13). Not only the dead will be raised when Christ comes, but those who are alive will be caught up to be with the Lord (I Thess. 4: 15).

The early Christians suffered much at the hands of unjust and cruel men. In order to comfort them and

to encourage them to patience amid all their trials, the Apostle James reminded them of the "coming of the Lord." He was confident that this great outlook and hope would establish their hearts (James 5: 7-8).

The Christian is exhorted by the Apostle John to abide in Christ, so that "when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (I John 2: 28). It is to be observed that the entire present life of the Christian is to be affected by the hope of the *parousia.*

As in the days of the Apostles, so now many say, "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (II Pet. 3: 4). Certainly no man will believe that Christ will come, who is not ready to believe God. For that matter a man will not believe anything else that God has revealed if he is not ready to believe God. Our Lord said, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31). Because God has revealed this truth of the coming of Jesus, he who has true faith believes it with all his heart.

Unbelievers and enemies of Christ have something to which to look forward, but not with joy. Christ's coming will be a sad time for them. When "Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all," and, said Jesus, "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17: 30). This present time is indeed a time of trouble for Christians, but what will *that day* be to those who trouble them! Every sinner and disobedient person should shudder when he reads the following words of Paul: "And to you who are troubled

rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thess. 1: 7-8).

And now we come to a very important question occasioned by what has just been said. I have maintained the Scriptures teach that the coming, or parousia, of Christ will bring glory and blessing to the children of God and that this very coming will bring wrath and condemnation to the ungodly. The question is whether the various ways in which the New Testament represents the *coming of Christ* are meant to designate separate and different *comings*. Because the Scriptures in referring to Christ's coming again, speak of it in different terms as the "parousia," "the revelation," and "the day," or "the day of the Lord," do they therefore mean to teach that each of these designations refers to a separate event? In other words, are there to be three or more comings of Christ, or is there to be only one?

It is hard to see how there can be any difference of opinion on this matter. The Scriptures themselves leave no room for question. Let me simply lay before you some of the passages of the New Testament where these three different terms are used and judge for yourselves whether they can be made to teach anything but *one* coming of the Lord.

Our Lord said, "As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming [*parousia*] of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24:37). In the First Epistle to the Thessalonians we read, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? [*parousia*]" (2:19).

In this same epistle the Apostle Paul wrote, "To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming [*parousia*] of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints" (3: 13). "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming [*parousia*] of our Lord Jesus Christ" (5: 23). And to the same Christians he wrote, "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming [*parousia*] of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep" (I Thess. 4:15). "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming [*parousia*] of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand" (II Thess. 2: 1-2).

James, in exhorting his fellow-believers, said, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming [*parousia*] of the Lord. . . . Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming [*parousia*] of the Lord draweth nigh" (James 5: 7-8).

Peter declared thus: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? [*parousia*]" (II Pet. 3:3-4). "Looking for and hastening unto the coming [*parousia*] of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (II Pet. 3: 12).

And John wrote: "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have con-

fidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming [*parousia*]" (I John 2: 28).

In the passages of Scripture just read, the coming of Christ is spoken of as the *parousia.* Another term used of the coming of Christ is *revelation,* or, as it is in the Greek, *apokalupsis,* and its verbal form, *apokalupto.* Let us also look at those passages where this term is used. I shall not make any comment upon them now but simply quote them as you will find them in your Bible.

"But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is *revealed* [*apokalupto*]" (Luke 17: 29-30).

"So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the *coming* [revelation—*apokalupsis*] of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 1: 7).

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be *revealed* [*apokalupto*] from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thess. 1: 7-8).

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the *revelation* [*apokalupsis*] of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1: 13).

And now let us look at those passages that refer to the coming of Christ as "the day of the Lord," "the day," "that day," "the day of God," or "the day of the Lord Jesus."

"Many will say to me in *that day,* Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have

cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7: 22-23).

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of *the day of God*, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" (II Pet. 3: 11-12).

"But of *that day* and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24: 36-37).

"For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in *his day*" (Luke 17: 24).

"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so *that day* come upon you unawares" (Luke 21: 34).

"But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in *that day* for Sodom, than for that city" (Luke 10: 12).

"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable *day of the Lord* comes" (Acts 2: 20).

"The night is far spent, *the day* is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light" (Rom. 13: 12).

"So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also con-

firm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in *the day of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (I Cor. 1: 7-8).

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for *the day* shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is (I Cor. 3: 13).

"As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in *the day of the Lord Jesus*" (II Cor. 1: 14).

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until *the day of Jesus Christ*" (Phil. 1: 6).

"Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in *the day of Christ*, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain" (Phil. 2: 16).

"For yourselves know perfectly that *the day of the Lord* so cometh as a thief in the night. . . . But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that *that day* should overtake you as a thief" (I Thess. 5: 2, 4).

"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that *the day of Christ* is at hand" (II Thess. 2:1-2).

"For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against *that day*" (II Tim. 1: 12).

"The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; . . . . The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in *that day*" (II Tim. 1: 16, 18).

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall

give me at *that day:* and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4: 8).

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see *the day* approaching" (Heb. 10: 25).

"But *the day of the Lord* will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works therein shall be burned up" (II Pet. 3: 10).

I trust you will pardon my quoting these many passages of Scripture, but in view of much confusion and ignorance, I have felt it necessary to do this. Now, what do we notice about these various terms—*parousia, revelation,* and *"the day,"* which are found in them? It is as plain as anything can be that each refers to the same coming of Christ as one event. Let us, however, for the sake of clarity observe how these passages bear out this contention. To the Corinthians, we remember, the Apostle Paul wrote that Christians are waiting for the *revelation* of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this event, he continued, will take place at "the end," or in "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 1: 7-8). To the Thessalonian Christians he gave encouragement in their troubles by holding out to them the *revelation* of Jesus Christ from heaven; at which time He will take vengeance on the ignorant and the disobedient (II Thess. 1:7-8).

The Apostle Peter reminds believers that at the *revelation* of Jesus Christ, grace will be brought to them. Therefore they should hope to "the end" (I Pet. 1: 13). And at that time they will receive a crown of glory that will never disappear (I Pet. 5: 4).

Our Lord tells us that at His *revelation* it will rain fire and brimstone (Luke 17: 29-30).

In regard to the teaching that surrounds the words "the day of the Lord," or "the day," we find that our Lord taught that hypocrites will be separated from Him then (Matt. 7: 22-23). It will be a day of judgment, and it will come suddenly and unexpectedly to the world of men (Matt. 24: 36-37; Luke 10: 12; 17: 24).

Christians, according to Peter, are to look for the coming of the day of God, which day will come as a thief in the night and when also the heavens will be dissolved and the earth burned (II Pet. 3: 10-12).

The fellow-believers of Paul were exhorted by him to godliness in view of the fact that *the day* is "at hand" (Rom. 13: 12). Since that day will come as a thief in the night, he cautioned them against being overtaken by it (I Thess. 5: 2-4). It also will be for them a day of blamelessness (I Cor. 1: 7-8); a day of salvation (I Cor. 5: 5; Phil. 1: 6); a day of mercy (II Tim. 1: 16-18); a day of judgment (I Cor. 3: 13); and a day of rejoicing (II Cor. 1: 14; Phil. 2: 16).

Paul's faith was strong and victorious because he knew Christ would enable him to persevere until "that day" and that then none of his interests would suffer loss (II Tim. 1: 12). There would also be given to him "at that day" a "crown of righteousness" (II Tim. 4: 8).

Now, it may readily be seen from the Scriptures here presented that believers, in looking for the parousia of the Lord Jesus (I Thess. 2: 19; 3: 13; 4: 15; James 5: 7-8; II Pet. 3: 12; I John 2: 28) are said also to be waiting for the "revelation" and "the day of Christ." How anyone can refer these various designations to any thing but the same event is difficult to understand.

It is impossible if Scriptural language means anything at all.

And the wicked, or ungodly, have no other "day" or "revelation" or "coming" to overtake them. It is also these designations that are applied to them. When the Son of man will be *revealed* it will rain fire and brimstone (Luke 17: 30), and He will take vengeance in flaming fire "on them that know not God" (II Thess. 1: 7-8). The heavens will then be on fire and the elements will melt because of the heat (II Pet. 3: 10). On that day the Lord will say to many, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7: 22-23). The parousia will be as it was in the days of Noah (Matt. 24: 36-37). At that time the secrets of men will be judged and every man's work will be tried (Rom. 2: 16; I Cor. 3: 13).

Thus, I trust, it has been made abundantly evident that the New Testament speaks of the *one coming* of Christ in these different ways. I cannot emphasize too strongly that this event will be one of rejoicing and blessedness for those found in Christ and a time of wrath and judgment for all unbelievers.

The next event, then, in the drama of salvation, is the coming of the Lord from heaven. The night of this world is almost near its close, and the true believer in Jesus waits for his salvation, which will come with the dawn. "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand" (Rom. 13: 11-12).

What a far-reaching and supernatural faith is the religion contained in the New Testament! That Jesus, who was supernaturally born, and who died and rose again from the tomb in the same body with which He was buried, will yet come again from heaven to this

world. Seriously ponder the meaning of this. Does it mean anything at all to you? Unless your faith rests in His finished work upon the cross, where He died to satisfy divine justice, that day will overtake you as a thief. Then it will be too late for repentance. For you then there will be nothing remaining but wrath and judgment. Remember well, He will come suddenly and when He is least expected. "Watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is" (Mark 13: 33).

This belief in the second coming of Christ by the Apostles and the early Christians made their faith what it was. They could not get along without it if they were to keep the faith of the gospel in its integrity. This may sound strange. Someone will say, "Is not the cross on which Christ died in the stead of men the central thing in the Christian faith? And is not the debt He paid to the law of God, making us righteous in the sight of God, that which causes the believer to rejoice in God?" To these questions we answer, "Yes, it is all true, very true." The death of Christ is the central thing in Christianity. There could be no hope for us sinners in this world and the next apart from the obedience of Christ for our salvation. And apart, we add, from the operation of the Spirit of God in applying His saving work to us, and His indwelling in the believer, there could not possibly be any joy or comfort for the human heart. But true as is all this, we have not yet attained to the glories of the New Testament faith if we see no more in the salvation purchased by Christ.

The Apostles and the early believers saw all that Christ had done for them, and by His Spirit He was continuing to do. But they saw more. And because they

saw more, what Christ had done and was continuing to do for them meant more. They understood their salvation better because a heavenly light was shed upon it. This light was the coming of the Lord of glory. Holding to this doctrine, their salvation appeared to them in all its divine splendor. Their faith glowed with a heavenly radiance. Now, if this doctrine of the second coming meant so much as to color every truth of the gospel, we cannot deny that it was an integral part of the New Testament faith, much less can we relegate it to a doctrine of only minor importance.

Now, let us observe how the hope of Christ's coming caused the primitive Christians to rejoice, and how it gave full meaning to their faith in the gospel.

When the New Testament speaks of salvation, it not only looks upon it as something present, but as something that is associated with the future coming of Christ. Salvation was to believers something future as well as something present. With the present joy that they had they mingled the joy of the coming of Jesus to deliver them. See how this is borne out by the words of the Apostle Paul when he says, "Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, *much more*, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5: 9-10). The cause for his rejoicing is not only the present justification, which is the possession of the believer, but also in the fact that through the resurrection life of Jesus he will be saved from the wrath of the judgment. It is the future coming of Christ that adds "much more" to the Apostle's salvation. When Christ will come, then he will realize all the benefits of redemption. The blessed hope will

bring the believer all that he lacks now. Then salvation in its completeness will be his forever.

In looking forward to Christ's coming the same Apostle could say, "For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. 13: 11). How could he help then but long for that event when he knew that it would add to the preciousness of what he already had in Christ!

Again, what makes up the believer's armor? It consists of several parts, but the helmet is called by the Apostle Paul "the hope of salvation" (I Thess. 5: 8). Thus it is plain that what is realized now by the believer through the death of Christ, will come to complete fruition at His second coming. The Christian is confident that he will not meet with wrath but acceptance and approval. "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 5: 8-9). It is not hard to see that one having this blessed hope will rejoice at the very thought of it.

Christians have not yet tasted the glory that will be theirs at Christ's coming. So great and wonderful is this glory to come that it appears to them as salvation itself. May I remind you again of the words I have just quoted, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed," and "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." Strange as we might think it is, it is a fact that Paul regarded the coming of Jesus as salvation itself and not, as we might think, the consummation of our salvation. Is it any wonder that to the early Christians salvation was so heavenly and glorious? May it not be that the lack of warmth and heavenliness that is manifest in

present-day Christianity is due to the dimness of the view of the coming of Jesus?

So then, the Christian, according to the Bible, sees his salvation in the light of that great epochal and catastrophic event, the coming of God's Son in the clouds of heaven. For this coming he continually hopes. And what a very real and substantial hope it is! All Christian experience is ripening into that hope, as the Apostle Paul says: "We glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope" (Rom. 5:3-4).

It is this *hope* that marks the believer from the unbeliever (Rom. 8: 24). The unbeliever sorrows because he has not this hope (I Thess. 4: 13), while the believer is blessed in his looking for "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2: 13). Furthermore, believers in looking for the second coming of Christ are expecting in that event to realize the full fruitage of the righteousness which was conferred upon them when they were justified (Gal. 5: 5). And in their looking for the Savior from heaven they have fallen heir to a hope that has in it the blessedness of life eternal.

Because Christ's coming meant so much to the first believers, we can readily understand the eagerness with which they looked for Him. Their intensity of feeling is witnessed in such words of the Apostle Paul as these: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. . . . Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8: 19, 23).

How the Apostle Paul pitied those who did not have this blessed hope, even though they might have some

hope in Christ in this life! He says, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (I Cor. 15: 19). By these words he means to say that if men hope in Christ for this life and stake everything on that, they are indeed in a pitiable condition. Any hope in Christ without something real to which to look forward, is a very worthless thing. If one does not have a real hope to engage his mind and heart, he has not gained much by believing in Christ. This real hope of the Christian is the parousia of the Lord of glory.

It is hard for us to understand how Christians so eager to see their Lord (for so much depends upon His coming) can yet be quiet and serene. As we have seen, they had an intense and live feeling as they looked for the Savior from heaven, but at the same time they were tranquil and full of peace. "How and why?" we ask. Because by faith they knew they were already sharers in the bliss of heaven. Christ is now in heaven, and believers, being raised up with Christ, sit with Him in heavenly places (Eph. 1:3, 20).

There was no externalism about the faith of the primitive church; neither were they impatient. They could safely rest themselves in the Father's hands, for they knew it was His good pleasure to give them the kingdom.

Do we have less than what is portrayed in the Bible? Therein is revealed the only faith worth having. It is the faith of salvation and the faith of hope in a glorious redeemer.

Is this faith of the saints yours? Remember, if it is not, you are without God and hope in the world.

II

WHEN WILL CHRIST COME?

For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.—HEB. 10:37

I HAVE never heard a sermon on the second coming of Christ. This may sound strange, but it is nevertheless true as far as my experience goes. Now, I do not mean that I have never heard the coming of Christ mentioned in sermons, for I have; indeed in some sermons much was said about the second coming of Christ, but the main drift of the sermons was not the second coming. Most of the attention was centered on other things, a number of things that it was supposed would happen when Christ comes. The central thing, "The Coming," was always pushed to the side to make way for human fancies. And how interested people are in those speculative events that the preacher said would happen! I do not think people will go out of their way today to hear a sermon on the second coming. They want to hear things that will tickle their fancies and stir up their speculative imaginations. Today, as it was said long ago by Tertullian, "There is a wide search after uncertainties, and a wider discussion of assumptions." There is something wrong with the Chris-

tianity of the present day if the truth of the second coming itself does not thrill the soul.

Trusting, however, that the second coming of Christ is a doctrine of the Word of God of which each is well assured, and hoping that it will ever have a true spiritual interest, I now ask a question of wide concern: When will Christ come? Again we cannot attempt to answer such a question out of our own heads but we must repair to the Bible. Does it have anything to say about that question? Our text says He shall come "for yet a little while." What and when is this *little while*? If there is an answer to this question, let us look for it in the Bible, and in the Bible alone.

There is a certain time in which, the Bible says, Christ will come. Perhaps this time is not as definite as many would like it to be, but it is definite enough for all humble and devout minds. That time, as the Apostle Peter tells us, is the "last time," or the "last days" (see also John 6: 40, 44, 54). He says of Christians that they "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the *last time*" (I Pet. 1: 5). By these words he tells us very plainly that Christ will come in the "last time," or "last days," for the salvation of which he speaks refers to the coming of Christ. We know much when this is told us, for there is much said about the "last days" in Scripture.

In order to understand properly the teaching of the Bible on the "last days" it will be necessary for us to know the Old Testament background of the phrase. I hope your good nature will incline you to some degree of indulgence towards some technical discussion.

Long ago the aged patriarch, Jacob, called his sons together in order to tell them what would befall them in

the "last days"[1] (Gen. 49: 1). And in the course of his prophecy he said, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (vs. 10). In other words, Jacob said that Shiloh, who is the Messiah, would bring to an end the high position that Judah as a tribe should hold. Everything would lead up to and end in the Messiah, whose advent would mark the last days.

Another prophecy, which indicates that the days of the Messiah were to be "the last days" is found in the Book of Numbers. If you remember the account of Balaam, the false and wicked prophet, you will recall when he said to Balak that he would show him what Israel would do to his people in "the latter days"[2] (Num. 24: 14). In a vision Balaam did tell Balak what would happen then. Among other things he said, "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel" (Num. 24:17). This reference, too, is to the Messiah. Thus the Messiah's coming into the world would be in the "latter days," or "last days."[3]

It is interesting to note just here as we are considering this important matter, that the "last days" do not, in the Old Testament, refer only to the days of the Messiah but they sometimes are used to denote ETERNITY. This is seen in one of the wonderful prophecies

[1] The Hebrew designation of those days is **acherith hayyamim.**

[2] **Acherith hayyamim,** translated "last days" in Gen. 49:1.

[3] That these "last days" are last, and not to be followed by still more days of this world order is made clear from what Balaam says regarding Amalek and of his own death. "Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish forever" (Num. 24: 20). Balaam speaks of his death as his "last end." Accordingly, when the Messiah comes it will be in days the like of which will be no more in this world. They are final, but this does not preclude the possibility of the continuance of a different world order.

of Isaiah, in which is found these words: "And it shall come to pass in the *last days,* that the mountain of the Lord's house *shall be established* in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isa. 2:2; compare Mic. 4:1). This establishment of the Lord's house, which is here foretold as taking place in the "last days," is to be an establishment that is to have permanency and fixedness about it. There is to be no end to it.[4]

In the following words is pictured the conditions that will exist in that endless time spoken of as "the last days": "And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God *for ever and ever*" (Mic. 4:2-5).

Since only to heaven can be applied the words "permanence," "fixed," "endless," "forever and ever," and since in this world all is change, the "last days," which this prophecy foretells, must refer to the heavenly existence of God's people. Thus the "last days," ac-

[4] Nakon is the word used for established. In this Niphal form of the word kun, the meaning is: to be set up, confirmed, fixed, established.

cording to the Bible, will end up this world and issue into the heavenly state.

What an understanding we and all readers of the Bible ought to have now of the Old Testament prophecies! Much of the language of earth must be understood as having its fulfillment in heaven. This very passage of Scripture we have been considering has often been taken as referring to events to take place exclusively in this world, when by a careful study of the words themselves and by comparing Scripture with Scripture, we are led to take a tremendously *spiritual* meaning of them. They bring us before God, who, it is declared, will judge and teach His people and with whom in an eternal order of things they will find peace and security.

Now, we must remember that the New Testament writers were familiar with the Old Testament. And when they wrote they were given the Holy Spirit so that they might understand the Old Testament as it should be understood. No man can claim the infallibility they possessed. How then did they understand the teaching of the Old Testament concerning the last days?

There is a prophecy in Joel that relates to the last days about which the Apostle Peter has something to say. Let us first hear what Joel has to say, "And it shall come to pass *afterward*,[5] that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The

[5] In the Hebrew this is **achere ken.**

sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call" (Joel 2: 28-32). It will be noted that the prophet Joel does not use the words "last days" but the Apostle Peter, as we shall see, took this prophecy as referring to the "last days." And what we should not fail to see is that Peter took this prophecy as having been fulfilled in the days in which he was living. In referring to the events that transpired on the Day of Pentecost, Peter said, "But *this* is *that* which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the *last days*, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens will I pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2: 16-21).

Thus, according to Peter, the events that took place on the Day of Pentecost were in direct fulfillment of Joel's prophecy concerning the last days. Nothing then can be plainer than that the days following the ascension of Christ were in "the last days" prophesied in the Old Testament. At least, that is the way the Apostle

Peter looked at it. The only way in which one can deny this fact is to say that Peter was mistaken. But of course no true Christian can say that. With Peter's view of the last days the whole New Testament is in perfect agreement. It could not be otherwise, for the Holy Spirit is the author of what they wrote, and He cannot contradict Himself. Accordingly, the Apostle Paul believed also that the days since the coming of Christ into the world were the last days prophesied in the Old Testament. In writing to Timothy, his son in the faith, he expressed his belief that the things that were happening around him indicated the approaching end and that therefore the final days were come. He said: "This know also, that in the *last days* perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy" (II Tim. 3: 1-2).

But it may be said that in the passage just mentioned the Apostle referred to a time yet future. But this cannot be because soon after, he advised his readers to turn away in their daily life from the last-day state of things. When he said, "from such turn away," he made it very clear that he and they were living in the last days in regard to which he was warning them (II Tim. 3: 5).

And how certain John the Apostle was that he was living in the last time! There can be no question about his view. He wrote: "Little children, it is the *last time*: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the *last time*" (I John 2: 18). These words need no explanation. Anyone who will deal reverently and honestly with the words of Scripture cannot fail to see that John believed he was living in the last days prior

to Christ's coming, which days he called "the last time."

Perhaps it will be well to listen again to Peter on this matter: "Who [Christ] verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these *last times* for you" (I Pet. 1: 20). Just a word is necessary here. Observe that the last time is the time since the advent of Christ and that Peter's readers were living in that time. And when he looked about him and marked the conditions of that time, he knew that he was living in the dawn of the approaching day of Christ. He said, "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (II Pet. 3: 3-4).

To these words of Peter it might be well to add these words of Jude: "But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the *last time,* who should walk after their own ungodly lusts" (17-18).

It may be wondered why we are going into the Scriptural proof at such great length. It seems almost unnecessary to go any further, but it is surprising how the plain things of the Word of God give people so much trouble. Many make things difficult that are not difficult at all. For this reason it may not be amiss to present all the facts. I ask you to consider the opening verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in *these last days* spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1: 1-2). What the Apostle tells us is that God has revealed Himself

through His Son in the last days. When are the last days spoken of? They are "*these*" last days, or the days which were present to himself and to his readers. Thus what the Prophets saw as yet to come, the Apostle here saw as taking place in the days in which he lived.

It will help us now to recall for a moment what we learned from the Old Testament in regard to the word "last." When it speaks of "last days" it means final days, or days beyond which there are to be no more like them. To this the New Testament gives clear witness. In that sublime resurrection chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul says, "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit" (15: 45). In contrast with Adam, the first, Christ is the last. As there was not a man before Adam, so there will be no further Adam beyond Christ, the last Adam. So likewise when the word "last" is used with "days" there can be no more days of the same kind, that is earthly days, beyond them.

What will be after the last days? Certainly no more days of this present order, for we have seen that they are the last. Only something else can follow, and that is eternity. Does not Paul mean this when he says, "The fashion of this world passeth away" (I Cor. 7: 31)? And when he says that upon believers in Jesus "the ends of the world are come," does he not mean that they are living in days which will wind up this terrestrial order of things?

If there are to come any more of days of this world order after Christ's coming, then there must be another end of the world. Of this there is no intimation anywhere in the whole Bible. Rather do we read, "now once in the end of the world hath he [Christ] appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb.

9: 26). It is this present era that is the "end time" and when it terminates there will be no further terminations of it, if we are to believe what we have just read, and give heed to the words of the Lord when He said, "The harvest is the end of the world" (Matt. 13: 38-43; 49-50).

Living in the last days, as the New Testament writers and all rightly informed early Christians believed, they were looking for the coming of Christ, which event to them would bring the last days to a close. It was the next coming event on their horizon. Just as at a determined time in the mind of God, Christ came to take away sin by His death upon the cross, so at a determined time at the end of days, they believed He would come again.

The early Christians looked for Christ's coming with great expectancy and eagerness. Yea, they hoped and wished for that blessed event, because they were assured that in His faithfulness to them He would not tarry. He would not forget to come nor would He delay any longer than the day He had already determined in His own wise counsels.

And how eager they were for the realization of this hope, this Blessed Hope, as they called it! The New Testament breathes the air of expectancy. The eyes of believers were steadfastly set upon heaven, from whence they looked for the Savior. They were only obedient to the words of Him whom they loved, when He said, "Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." (Matt. 24: 44).

Just here, there no doubt comes to our minds a very interesting question. It is this: What made the Apostles and the early Christians so eager for His glorious ap-

pearing? Was it because they thought He would come soon or in their lifetime? Did they think it was only a matter of hours, days, or months and He would come? In other words, was it the nearness of the time to His coming that made them so hopeful and eager for it?

There is no trace of such a sentiment to be found in the New Testament. If there is in it such a belief, then the New Testament writers were mistaken, for two thousand years have almost elapsed and Christ has not come. The fact is they were not mistaken, because they did not entertain such a view. But why, it may be asked, should they then be eager for His coming and look for it with expectancy, if they did not believe He would come during their lifetime? The answer is not difficult to find when one understands the nature of their faith in Christ.

Jesus Christ was their all in all. They loved Him with an affection the like of which, to say the least, is rare in our modern world. It was a love that was born of His redeeming love for them. They were saved through His precious blood from the pains of hell forever. And now they had His promise that He would come in the clouds of heaven to receive them to Himself. Could they help but long for Him, their adorable and blessed Savior? Their longing was so intense that any intervening time that must elapse was as nothing. Certainly the time was short when the eye of faith could already see the coming Savior.

An illustration here may be very helpful. Suppose we know that the government of the United States will at some time in the future be better than it is now. Suppose we know for a certainty that justice and honor

will prevail. Now, I am not predicting that such a time will come, but I am only supposing that we know that such a time will certainly come. What lover of righteousness is there who would not begin to long earnestly for that time to come! We would hardly be able to wait for that day in view of the many disappointments and almost unbearable conditions. We would be so eager for that good day that the days intervening would become bearable and because bearable short as far as we are concerned. Even though many days and many things would need to transpire in the intervening period, it would be as nothing when such a glorious prospect would be in view.

So the Apostles knew for a certainty that Jesus would come, and they knew they were living in the days before His coming. That would be the next great redemptive event. They were eager for it with all their hearts. Time just faded away, and they saw Jesus only. It was not because they thought Christ would come in their lifetime that caused them to look for Him, but rather firmly believing in His coming, they anticipated it with great joy and hopefulness.

That this is the view of the time of Christ's coming held by the primitive church is borne out by some striking statements of the Apostle Paul in the seventh chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians. In the following passages he inclined to advise single people not to marry: "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be" (vss. 25-26).

The reasons he gave for this advice are not because he thought there were troubles connected with married life as such, nor because he thought Christ was coming soon. As a matter of fact he never prohibited or even discouraged marriage, for he said, "If thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned" (vs. 28). He left this matter entirely up to the individual.

But he did have a very definite reason for inclining to give the advice he stated. The reason was simply "the present distress," or the hostile conditions of the times. This "present distress" is, however, not limited to the times in which they lived, but takes on added meaning as he associated it with a time in the future. This he did when he said, "Nevertheless such *shall have trouble* in the flesh: but I spare you" (vs. 28). That the Apostle was also referring to some special and unusual time of persecution or tribulation yet to come is affirmed by the words, "the time is short," in verse 29. He was reminding them that the coming of Christ is yet future and that being the case, tribulation cannot fail to come also. And since this is so, he would spare them.

Furthermore, the reason that Paul gave for similar advice, namely, "They that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it" (vss. 30-31), is that "the fashion of this world passeth away." It was the end he had in view, and not the nearness in time to the end. He said in effect: The end is approaching, and Christians, because they are living in the end

time, ought especially to think upon the Lord and the way in which they may best please Him. What Paul said to the Corinthians is applicable to every Christian today.

It was this view of the time of Christ's second coming held by the first believers that did not make them indifferent to the things of the present life. If any were unconcerned about the present life because they erroneously thought the Lord would come in their lifetime, they received this sharp rebuke from Paul, "We beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded" (I Thess. 4: 10-11).

These are the last days. "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." The same Christ who "was once offered to bear the sins of many" shall "unto them that look for him appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9: 28). How we ought to be reminded of the words of the Savior, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," and then endeavor to walk worthy of Him in well pleasing! And no sinner should rest until he has made his peace with God.

Watch and pray, for ye know not when the Lord cometh! Get busy in preparation by hearkening to His call of salvation and righteousness.

The day is far spent. The evening of the world's history is upon us. It will soon be over. How long it will be before the Lord comes we do not know, but of this we are certain: the world will not continue as it is at present forever. Every day it is coming nearer to its end.

Then time will be no more and faith will issue in

sight and struggle in victory. Oh, what Christian breast does not long for it as he hears the Savior say, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is." To this announcement and promise, the redeemed cry back, "Even so, come Lord Jesus."

III

THE SIGNS OF CHRIST'S COMING

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?—MATT. 24: 3

ONLY by God's grace is one enabled to rise to a longing and cherishing faith in the coming of God's Son from heaven, though that blessed event be near or far away. True faith ever looks upward for the Savior. The possessor of this faith will not rest until he is in the very presence of Jesus.

Christ will return with greater glory and honor than any illustrious warrior ever returned from the field of battle. Before an ancient conqueror, returning from conflict, reached the capital city, heralds were sent before to announce his approach. When the populace heard the trumpets and saw the messengers, they knew their deliverer was on the way. Will the Son of God, too, send forth heralds to tell of His coming? Will the heralds be in the form of some sign or signs to tell us that the great God and Savior is near?

Our text embraces just such questions as we have now asked. The disciples of Jesus asked Him, "What shall

be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Our Lord answered this question. He told His disciples plainly that certain events and signs would precede His coming. These events and signs are found recorded in the following three places in the Gospels: Matthew, chapter 24; Mark, chapter 13; and Luke, chapter 21.

What are these events and signs revealed by our Lord, which would serve to inform His disciples that He will surely come?

Here we need to be very careful. It is natural for us to want to know everything about the signs of His coming. But if the Lord does not tell us everything we would like to know about these things, let us leave to Him any question it has pleased Him not to answer and with thankfulness let us rejoice in what He in His infinite wisdom has disclosed.

And what a marvelous disclosure the all-knowing Savior made! Even though it is not easy for us to grasp the significance of all that He said, there is nevertheless presented a picture of the days of the end for which every Christian ought to be grateful and because of which every ungodly man should tremble and repent of his sins.

Let us begin at the beginning. To everyone who has read the Gospels, the following lament of Jesus over Jerusalem is familiar, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. 23: 37). These are indeed touching words of mercy and compassion toward a rebellious race. And for Israel's rejection of Him, He added these words of judgment:

"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Furthermore, He told them that they would not see Him again till they should say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23: 39). And when the disciples showed Him the buildings of the Temple, He again pronounced judgment upon Israel by telling them that not one stone of it would be left upon another (see Matt. 24: 2).

I hope all will not fail to read carefully these important words uttered by our Savior. We have noted two things in them. The first is a pronouncement of woe upon Israel for the rejection of their Messiah, and the second is a promise of comfort and hope.

Let us look at the words of blessing. Our Lord said that He would come again. And when He does come the children of Israel will say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Immediately the disciples began to hope and long for the day of His return, for at that time Israel will be accepted again into God's favor. They asked Him when it would take place and what would be the signs to announce His approach.

It is natural that the disciples should wish their Lord's coming not to be far away. The calamities He told them that must befall Israel would be awful. This great trial that faced Israel, without question, caused the disciples much anxiety and pain. They, therefore, hoped it would be but for a short time, and the sooner His coming the shorter would be the time of Israel's suffering. At His coming they would see the now rebellious people of Israel believing in Him as their Messiah! Certainly the disciples were eager for that day to come. Their very question, "Tell us, when shall these things be?" indicates intense eagerness and longing.

But our Lord warned them not to be impatient or to be deceived into thinking that the days of woe for Israel would not be long. Some would come and say they were Christ, but these they were not to believe. Even after they heard of wars and rumors of wars, they were not to think that the end had come. Furthermore, sorrows would only be in their beginning when nation would rise against nation and when there would be earthquakes, famines, and troubles. Before the end would come they would be delivered up to councils, and be beaten, killed, and betrayed not only by the rulers but by members of their own households. Beside all this, the gospel would be preached to all nations and Jerusalem destroyed (Mark 13:10; Luke 21: 20). After such a disclosure of events that would precede His coming, they needed to hear the Lord say, "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21: 19).

Yes, there was need for patience as Jesus pulled aside the curtain of the future. What dreadfulness and terror did He permit them to see! Those living in Judea should be prepared to flee to the mountains. Mothers and children would have a hard time of it. So great would the affliction be that no calamities of the past would be able to compare with it. Unless God, for the elects' sake, should shorten those days, no one would remain. Horrible indeed will be the days before His coming!

When the time comes for Jesus to be revealed, He will be seen "coming in a cloud with power and great glory." At that time there will be commotions and changes in the heavenly bodies, and some sign in heaven will mark His entrance into our world (Matt. 24:29-30). And it will be on that day that Israel shall say, "Blessed

is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23: 39).

We do not know how these words of woe, judgment, and promise affected the disciples, but we do know what should have been their reaction. They should have given themselves to watching, praying, and diligent obedience to all the Word of God.

How do these words of the Savior affect you? Do they incline your heart to turn from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven? If not, it is a heart of stone that you have that can resist the threatenings of the Lord. Do they not call you to a life of prayer, devotion, and labor toward Him who loved you and gave Himself for you? If not, the seed has fallen upon bad soil, and therefore you need the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus said, "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." "Watch . . . . lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping."

In attempting to understand this prophecy of our Lord, we recognize upon the patient reading of it that there are difficulties. He who finds this discourse of Jesus easy to understand has not seriously faced all that He said. Such a boaster of knowledge has not taken everything that is recorded into account.

But God's Word is true and contains no contradictions when examined honestly and sincerely. The orthodox Christian does not need to be afraid of so-called contradictions. Sometimes a man reads the Bible and, without taking pains to see if his opinion of it is borne out by the data which it presents, flaunts it before the world as a contradiction. If anyone treated any data in the scientific world in the superficial way some men treat

the Bible, he would immediately be put down as a quack or know-nothing.

A difficulty that presents itself is this: We are told in Mark 13:30 that the coming of Christ will be announced by signs that will take place during the time of the then living generation. Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done." But in verses 32-33, He said, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not even the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is." The meaning of this is that the time cannot be calculated. We "know not when the time is." In other words, verse 30 states that the coming will be known as near by signs that will be witnessed by those then living, and verses 32-33 seem to indicate that there will be nothing to enable them to know definitely that Christ is near.

But this difficulty is only a seeming one. It all becomes very clear when it is noted that Jesus, in these passages, is speaking of two different things. First, He speaks to His disciples of the events that must take place within the then living generation. And second, He speaks of something entirely different, namely "that day" which of course is the great day of His coming. Of the first they would know, by experience, but of the second they would never know until it came.

Having gotten over this seeming difficulty, we are still faced with some perplexing problems. Naturally we ask how much of this prophecy has been fulfilled and how much of it is yet to be fulfilled. Furthermore, we want to know what of those events that are yet to be fulfilled will take place before the parousia.

We know that the Temple was destroyed according

to the prediction of Jesus. But as for an answer to the second question, it will be well for us to look for light, not to some human wisdom, but in the very words of Christ. Let us pay strict attention to His words: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth; behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in

heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:15-30).

The first thing to be seriously faced is the fact that this latter portion of the prophecy dealing with "the abomination of desolation," great tribulation, false prophets and Christs, commotions in the heavens, and the sign of the Son of man, does not differ formally from the first part of it. For instance, in the early part of the discourse Jesus said, "Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Mark 13: 6), and toward the end of it the very same sentiment is expressed in the words: "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not" (Matt. 24: 23). Thus the tenor of the entire prophecy warns us against making arbitrary and sharp divisions.

Now, it is hard to say how much of this prophecy of Jesus is yet to be fulfilled. But suppose we say that the earlier portion (Matt. 24: 4-14) has been fulfilled or is being fulfilled and the latter part (Matt. 24: 15-30) comprises the events that will take place just before the coming. What happens if we take such a view? At once we get into serious trouble. We are then forced to go on record as believing that the Temple and its worship will be restored in Jerusalem just before the parousia.[6] Such a view is directly opposed to the explicit teaching of the New Testament. The Epistle to the Hebrews teaches that the Old Testament ritual

[6] This is involved in the "abomination of desolation" taken from Dan. 8: 13; 9: 27; 11: 31; 12: 11; which speak of the desecration of the Temple site by the setting up of something idolatrous, as a result of which it becomes desolate. The flight from Judea is also related to this view.

has been forever done away in Christ (Heb. 7: 27; 8: 13; 9: 12, 24-28; 10: 4, 12-15).

And we also get into difficulty if we interpret the first part of the discourse of Jesus as being limited to what has already been fulfilled or is in the process of fulfillment, for what shall we do with the saying of our Lord that "this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done"?[7] This occurs in the early part of the discourse (Matt. 24: 14). If all that precedes this statement has been fulfilled, why has not Christ come, for it all must not only happen before the end, but must straightway precede the end? "Then shall the end come" (Matt. 24: 14).

So then unless we involve the Word of God in hopeless contradictions, all that Jesus said in the first part of His discourse cannot be limited to what has already been fulfilled, and neither can the latter part be limited to what must take place in the future. To what conclusion are we then led if we honestly deal with the words of Jesus, and bear in mind that there can be no contradictions in Him? It is that we cannot interpret this prophecy as a chronological picture of events at all, that is, as events which take place one right after the other. Nothing makes this so plain as the word "immediately" in Matt. 24: 29, which closely connects every part of the whole discourse. We read that "*immediately* after the tribulation of those days" there will be changes and commotions among the heavenly bodies and then Christ will come (see vs. 30). Immediately after what days will Christ come? It cannot mean that He

[7] "This generation" means the then living generation. There is no warrant for taking it to mean the Jewish race or the human race. Neither can the artificial distinction be made between the preaching of the gospel to all the nations and the completion of the Gentile mission.

will come right after, in time, some of the days and events of which He spoke, for then He would have had to come right after the destruction of Jerusalem, which has already taken place. Neither did He mean that He would come immediately in time after the events recorded last, because it would not allow for the change of attitude of the Jews toward Him. When He comes they will call Him blessed.

If then this is not a chronological picture,[8] what is it? Let us remember that our Lord is answering His disciples' inquiry as to when He would come, so that Israel might be received again into favor. He took a view of the future which is evidently foreign to our way of thinking. In one sweep the whole period between His resurrection and second advent is depicted without marking the events in their order of succession. We therefore cannot tell which signs will definitely proclaim the immediate coming of Christ.

But all that the Lord Jesus Christ predicted will yet come to pass. He is God and knows all things. Some of His predictions have already come to pass, as we have seen, and just as surely will the others take place in God's appointed time. We are living in days of woe and calamity. Who knows when all that Jesus spoke will come to pass? It may be a long time or a short time, but all these things will be fulfilled, and then the Lord will come.

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[8]Jesus could use the word immediately, not in a chronological sense, because He actually joined together the Jewish national and final crisis. In Matt. 10:23 His interposition for the deliverance of the fugitive disciples is called a coming of the Son of man. But the two comings are not identical, since in Matt. 16: 27-28 the coming to aid His disciples in His glorified state is referred to as an encouragement toward faithfulness and self-sacrifice, just as the reward at the parousia is mentioned for the same purpose.

Watch and pray is what Jesus told His disciples. He is saying that to us today. No one knows the day of His parousia, but He will come when least expected by men. Every event that is happening about us is meant to speak to every man living. Does the earth quake? Then tremble for your sins, for when you are least prepared for it, you will stand before God. And unless you are clothed in Christ's righteousness, you are undone. Hell and perdition is yours forever and ever. Are there wars and rumors of wars? Then bestir yourself, for sooner than you realize the next sound you will hear may be that of a trumpet blown by an angel of God.

Surely none of us can escape His wrath unless we are prepared to say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Unless we can look forward to His coming as our Savior from sin, He will come as our judge.

IV

THE JEWS, THEIR CONVERSION AND THEIR LAND

For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? . . . And so all Israel shall be saved.—ROM. 11:15, 26

EVERYONE is aware that today there exists in the world a race of people known as the Jews. These people are also called Hebrews, or Israelites. They are scattered over the whole world but nevertheless maintain their identity as a race.

Their history is a long one and their lot in this world has been everything but pleasant. They have been and are now a suffering people, being in these times the objects of bitter and hellish persecution.

The true Christian church, that is, the true believers in Jesus Christ, the Lord, have dealt kindly with the Jews. They have defended their rights, have sought to do them good, and have made every effort to present to them the way of eternal life in Jesus, the only Savior and Messiah. But Christian interest in their welfare somehow has involved more than the interest which is manifest toward an unbelieving and downtrodden people. And why? Because the Bible, the

Word of God, has much to say about them. A heathen and benighted African, on learning to read the Holy Scriptures, is made familiar with their history and character. He finds also that the message of redemption in the sacred page is not separated from an understanding of their earthly pilgrimage.

The child in the Christian home that is taught the Bible learns of Israel. The message of God to man, beginning with Abraham, the child learns, has come through this people. And when Christian parents tell their children of Jesus, the Son of God, they are reminded of the fact that He, according to the flesh, was a member of that race. It is then perfectly natural that Christians should have a more than ordinary interest and concern regarding the Jews.

It is our purpose now to deal with Israel in relation to the great Bible doctrine of the second coming of Christ, but before we can intelligently do so, we must know something of the position they hold in the Word of God. Just what is the place of Israel in the Scriptures?

It should never be forgotten that the Scripture of the Old and New Testaments is a message of redemption. It is the revelation of God's will for man and of what man must do in order to be right with God. In reply to the question, "What do the Scriptures principally teach?" the Westminster Shorter Catechism gives the correct answer when it says, "The Scriptures principally teach, what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man." If a man misses this meaning of the import of the Bible, no matter what else he knows about it, he has missed it all.

Now, before there was a Hebrew race, God revealed

Himself to man and made known His will to him. Since man fell in Adam, God declared to man how he might be made right with Himself. Graciously, in His sovereign mercy, God determined to save man out of his lost condition. Without looking to man to save himself or in any way relying upon him to cooperate, God promised to destroy sin and bring him into favor again through the "seed of the woman," or the Redeemer (Gen. 3: 15). In this gratuitous offer of salvation to the race of fallen man, man could do but one thing. He could only trust. There was nothing else he could do if he were to be saved. The only way open to him was to rely entirely upon God's grace and power.

Immediately, and as time went on, man began to show into what degradation he had fallen, by his disobedience to God. What degeneracy and corruption is manifest in the behavior of Cain! Rapidly men became arrogant and took all authority and power to themselves. Even the sense of sin and shame disappeared from their minds. Yet God's promise to save was not broken off but was only exhibited the more plainly upon the terrible background of apostasy and rebellion. To Abel, God showed His face in favor. The Epistle to the Hebrews in the New Testament tells us that "he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts" (Heb. 11: 4). In contrast with Cain, his brother, who slew him in cold blood, Abel cast himself upon God's mercy and grace and thus was saved from the effects of the fall.

On and on man went in his wickedness and defiance of God. Death, physical and spiritual, was his certain doom. Headlong to perdition he went, for God could not let sin go by unpunished. Would He let the race perish in its sin? His justice demanded it, but because

He is also gracious, He did not forget His promise or covenant to save.

God showed His grace in Enoch. This man "walked with God," that is, God brought him into favor with Himself. And when man is in a state of favor or communion with his Creator, he is delivered from death. Enoch, "was not; for God took him" (Gen. 5: 24). Here we see that trust in God's grace and power to save sinners issues in deliverance from death.

Out of the miserable wreck of fallen humanity, after judgment by a devastating flood, God continued His work of grace. He saved Noah and his family. In the course of time God showed Himself willing to become the God of Shem, one of the sons of Noah (Gen. 9: 26). Let it be noted, this was the first time that God attached His favor to a particular group of mankind.

It is from this group of Shem that Abraham came. Called by God from Ur of the Chaldees, he was chosen to become the father of a race through which and in which God determined to show forth His grace and love to the world. It pleased God, in His good pleasure, to take out of the existing Shemitic families, one family in which He purposed to carry forward His graciousness. Incidentally, permit me to remark that here is exhibited in wonderful clearness the great Bible doctrine of election. It is from this time on that the whole course of redemption is confined within the narrow channel of one people.

Here we come to an important point, a point so important and far reaching that anyone who wishes to understand the Bible must know well, yes, very well. This point is that God narrowed the channel of His redemptive operations in order that in the course of

time that channel might overflow its banks and touch the shores of every nation. In other words, God's grace was manifested in the one nation, Israel, in order that He might through them bring His salvation to every nation and people in the world. God chose a particular means towards a universal end. Abraham himself was given to understand this when God said to him, "In thee shall *all* families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12: 3).

This universal purpose of God in choosing Abraham and his seed is also seen in Abraham's meeting with Melchizedek. The knowledge of the true God was not entirely lost before Abraham. Melchizedek knew the true God, and this Abraham fully recognized when he received the blessing from him. In this Abraham saw also that divine grace was not limited to himself but was to make its way to people outside of his own seed.

When one observes how God dealt with Abraham, he is struck with the high spiritual tone of it all. Abraham's faith and trust were in God alone. Around this faith in God all his earthly life centered. Every promise that was given to him has its roots in the principle of faith. Such grace could not possibly be closed up in one earthly family. We need but to turn to the words of the Holy Spirit of God speaking through the Apostle Paul to see that this is so. In the Epistle to the Galatians, he said that the grace shown to Abraham was not only for himself and his seed, but was through his Seed, which is Christ, to reach all men. All those who believe in Jesus Christ share in the same promise given to Abraham (Gal. 3: 15-16, 22). Thus if any man today rests in the grace of God shown to Abraham, he becomes a child of Abraham. Every believer in Christ becomes a member of the true people of God and is a true

Israelite, as God meant Israelites to be. Let Paul speak again: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. . . . There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3: 26, 28-29).

Now, the Law given at Mount Sinai 430 years after Abraham was never meant to change the grace of God or to confine it permanently to one people. This the Apostle Paul makes clear when he says, "And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect" (Gal. 3: 17). It was then, the older way of grace that regulated the temporary Israelitish economy. The grace of God is everything in man's redemption, and the narrow stem through which the sap of grace flowed was never meant by God to be an end in itself. The sap of God's grace and redeeming love flowed through the narrow stem, Israel, in order that there might come forth flowers of the gospel whose scent might heal the nations.

But there were people in New Testament times who could not see this basic principle of God's dealing with men. They were called Judaizers. Stubbornly they resisted the gospel of the grace of God. Physical descent from Abraham, they thought, made a man a true Israelite. At all cost, they would keep the distinction between Israel and the Gentiles. Israel was Israel, and Gentiles were Gentiles. There was to be no crossing of boundaries.

Certainly there is some truth here; the Jews are not Gentiles according to an earthly way of speaking. But God's way is not man's way. Israel from the beginning

was a spiritual people, and through them the Gentiles were to be called into the spiritual family of God. This is God's way of dealing with mankind. The worldly-wise religious leaders insisted on frustrating God's original purpose and so degraded the grace of God to the level of earth. Is it not sad to see, after nineteen centuries of Christian history, men who call themselves Bible teachers falling into the error of the Judaizers of long ago?

No, it is not being a descendent of Abraham in the flesh that makes one an Israelite indeed. The national privilege has been done away because that for which it was designed has been fulfilled. This is exactly the contention of Paul, who said, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Rom. 9: 6-7). "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect. . . . Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all" (Rom. 4: 13-14, 16).

Our Lord knew that the Israelites of His day were not mindful of their spiritual calling. They thought that their national privileges entitled them to the promises of God. What did He say to them? "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Luke 3: 8).

Yes, the Jews boasted of their descent from Abraham, but that was nothing of which to be proud, if the faith of Abraham was lacking. With all their pride of race and ancestry they were without faith the children of their father, the devil (John 8: 39, 44).

Even circumcision as practiced by the Israelites in the Old Testament was meant to teach them that human descent was not sufficient to make a descendant of Abraham a true Israelite. As an ordinance of God, it pointed them to the need of justification in the sight of God and holiness of heart and life. When Jeremiah complained that the ears of the Jews were uncircumcised, he was bemoaning the fact that the rite did not affect their lives toward God: "Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it" (Jer. 6: 10). It was the circumcision of the heart that God required then. So Moses looked upon it long ago when he said to the Jews, "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live" (Deut. 30: 6).

And now, according to the Apostle Paul, every believer who worships God in the spirit, rejoices in Christ Jesus, and has no confidence in the flesh, is of the circumcision (Phil. 3: 3). He says to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews of Colossae: "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2: 11).

It is also to be remembered that every promise of God made to Israel had no importance apart from God Himself. God never meant in the earthly and typical to hide the spiritual. That is just the way the patriarchs,

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, understood the promises. Did they regret not possessing the land which God promised them? Not at all. They were content to dwell in tents, not because their hope was a literal Canaan, which to be sure God did promise them, but because from the earthly that they did not possess, they looked upward to possess an inheritance in God Himself. That this was the understanding of the patriarchs we are told, not by the opinion of fallible man, but by an inspired Apostle. In the Epistle to the Hebrews (11: 10) the Apostle, in speaking of the faith of Abraham as touching the promises, said, "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." That is, Abraham set his heart, not upon something earthly, but upon an habitation that God built and made. Every earthly promise led him to look for its ultimate fulfillment in heaven where God is.

But many so called experts in the religion of Israel are wiser than the Apostle and look for what Abraham never looked as the ultimate goal of his people—an earthly fulfillment of the promises. This may be understood of unbelievers, but it is hard to conceive of many who claim to believe in the infallibility and inspiration of the Bible.

Ah, what a spiritual religion is that which is revealed in the Scriptures! It was sovereign grace in election that separated Abraham from the rest of men, and it is that grace which separates men today. Now there is a people of God chosen out of every nation and kindred. All the elect of God have nothing of which to boast and to which to look forward in this world. Their only hope is heaven and their only plea is the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross. This redemption and hope

are only the possession of those Jews and Gentiles whom God hath before the foundation of the world called in Christ Jesus.

It was necessary to take the time which we have spent in dealing with the question of who and what are the Jews. We are now, I trust, in a better position to take up the theme further.

Let no one think that in all that has been said it is held that God is finished with Israel as a nation. There is unmistakable teaching to the effect that God will again visit them with His grace in their racial capacity.

The Apostle Paul, in dealing with Israel as a nation, said, "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11:15). The point he made is that the Jews as a people will be brought back into God's favor, that is, they will be converted. And the result of this will be "life from the dead." What is meant by "life from the dead" here? Does Paul mean that the conversion of the Jews will bring with it the resurrection of the dead? If so, Israel's acceptance of the Messiah will bring the coming of Christ from heaven. This is exactly what the Apostle means, because he relates the "life from the dead" to the "reconciling of the world." The former is the climax of the latter. "Life from the dead" must be something far higher and greater than the "reconciling of the world." What is that which can be greater than the reconciliation now experienced by the world, but the resurrection of life? Paul, in one sweep, views the blessedness of the

redemption purchased by Christ from its beginning to its glorious consummation.[9]

This meaning of the Apostle is further made plain by what he says in verses 25 and 26: "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Paul implies in these words that when Christ will come two things will already have been attained, namely the bringing in of the Gentiles and the salvation of Israel. However, it is not said how soon Christ's coming will be after the two-fold purpose of the gospel preaching has been completed.

At the present time Jews are being converted here and there through the preaching of the gospel. Their rejection of Christ as a nation is opening the gates of salvation to the Gentiles. And this grace shown to Gentiles is intended to provoke the Jews to jealousy, not only individually, as happens now, but also as a nation in the future. Paul said, "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy" (Rom. 11: 11). He does not refer here to single conversions, because in the following verse he makes it clear that he has in mind the national apostasy of Israel. He said, "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how

[9] The phrase, zoe ek nekron, "life from the dead," cannot be toned down to a metaphorical meaning, implying a mere spiritual revival. The context will not permit this interpretation. The opposite of "casting away" requires a condition that is more glorious than "the receiving of them." The beginning of the closing act of God's dealing with man only can be meant.

much more their fullness?" (Rom. 11: 12). They have fallen and have been diminished as a *nation* in their relation to God, so when their "fullness" takes place, it must also be as a *nation.* The "riches of the world" and the "riches of the Gentiles" clearly refer to the pagan nations, so the fall of Israel in contrast to the pagans must also be *racial.* If their fall was *national,* their recovery or salvation must also be national.

Now, of course, the Apostle does not mean that all the Jews will be saved when Christ comes. If he meant this he would have to be understood as teaching that all the Gentiles are to be saved. Just as he does not mean by the "riches of the world" and the "riches of the Gentiles" the conversion of all Gentiles, so he does not mean by the "fullness" of the Jews the conversion of all the Jews. Any idea of a universal salvation is foreign to the teaching of the Bible.

If Israel as a *nation,* in the collective sense, is to be saved before Christ comes, will they go back to their Land of Palestine? That is a question that has concerned many. Some think the Jews will be restored to their land after their conversion and there made a distinct nation again. Others think they will go back to Palestine in unbelief and then be converted. All those who hold to a national restoration of the Jews in Palestine do so on the ground that the Bible teaches it. And if the Bible does teach this, then every Christian is bound to believe it.

But just what is the Scriptural basis for such a view? It is held that the Old Testament predicts a return of the Jews to their land because the promise of God to Abraham has never yet been fulfilled. God promised to give to Abraham and to his seed all the land from

the river Nile, in Egypt, to the river Euphrates, in Mesopotamia. During all their history they have never occupied this territory. And, it is held, since the promise of God cannot fail, the time must yet come when the whole region granted to Abraham will be occupied by his descendants. This, in the main, is the alleged Bible ground for the belief in a restoration of the Jews to their land. And in addition to this Scriptural argument, this belief rests also on the contention that the Jews are already going back and establishing themselves as a nation in Palestine.

Now, as Christians, we must believe that the promises of God cannot fail. Sooner will heaven and earth pass away than any promise He has given can come to naught. But God expects us to read the promises carefully in order that we may get the meaning of them that God intended us to get. If we get from any promise of the inspired Word of God a meaning that the promise does not contain, and also believe the meaning that is not there, we cannot in all truthfulness say that we believe the promise of God. To believe what the Bible does not mean is as bad as denying what it does mean.

Let us therefore look at some of these prophecies in the Bible that are said to predict the return of the Jews to their land. The following words are found in the Book of Ezekiel: "For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. . . . And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country" (34: 11, 13). "And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in

my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children forever: and my servant David shall be their prince forever" (37: 24-25). "And he said unto me, Son of man, thus saith the Lord God; These are the ordinances of the altar in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon. . . . Seven days shalt thou prepare every day a goat for a sin offering: they shall also prepare a young bullock, and a ram out of the flock, without blemish" (43: 18, 25). "The priests and the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord God. . . . And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary, unto the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin offering, saith the Lord God" (44: 15, 27).

In these few citations from the prophecy of Ezekiel that speak of the restoration of the Jews to their land, it is plainly observed that interwoven with them are to be found predictions of the rebuilding of the Temple, the restoration of the priesthood, the offering again of sacrifices, and in fact the bringing back of the entire Mosaic ritual. These things must also be fulfilled if the Jews are to be restored to their land, because there is no way by which the two strands can be separated. They stand or fall together.

Furthermore, we must expect that every nation shall come to worship in Jerusalem every Sabbath, for Isaiah

and Zechariah prophesy thus: "And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord" (Isa. 66: 23). "And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain" (Zech. 14: 17).

Let us also carefully note that we must look forward to the institution and rite of circumcision as a necessary requirement for entrance into the sanctuary: "Thus saith the Lord God; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel" (Ezek. 44: 9). "Awake, awake; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean" (Isa. 52: 1).

Permit me just here to quote from another place in Isaiah: "And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord" (66: 20). According to this passage we are to expect the offerings to be brought upon horses, in chariots, in litters, and upon mules from all nations to Jerusalem. I am not suggesting that this is impossible with God, but this is what we must anticipate.

Now, all this leads us to a matter that is very serious. It is the Mosaic ritual and the sacrifices that are to be restored with the return of the Jews to Palestine. Pardon me if I must continue to quote further from the

Scriptures, for it is very important: "And the priest shall take of the blood of the *sin offering*, and put it upon the posts of the house, and upon the four corners of the settle of the altar, and upon the posts of the gate of the inner court. And so thou shalt do the seventh day of the month for *every one that erreth*, and for him that is simple: so shall ye *reconcile* the house" (Ezek. 45: 19-20). "Seven days shalt thou prepare every day a goat for a *sin offering*: they shall also prepare a young bullock, and a ram out of the flock, without blemish" (Ezek. 43: 25). "And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary, unto the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his *sin offering*, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 44: 27). "Then said he unto me, This is the place where the priests shall boil the *trespass offering* and the *sin offering*, where they shall bake the meat offering; that they bear them not out into the outer court, to *sanctify the people*" (Ezek. 46: 20).

Do these words not trouble you who have pondered the implications of a literal fulfillment of them? Do you not see what we are compelled to look forward to if we are to believe that the Scriptures teach the restoration of the Jews to their land? There must again flow blood for the remission of sin. Again men are to be reconciled by the offering up upon Jewish altars the blood of bulls and goats. This is exactly what these prophecies teach.

Now we, as Christians, are perfectly willing to believe this, but should we do so we are faced with the terrible consequences of denying plain and clear doctrines of the New Testament. Hear an inspired Apostle say, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*. And

every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered *one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God*" (Heb. 10: 10-12). "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9: 12). "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the *figures* of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others" (Heb. 9: 24-25). "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. . . . Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; for this he did once, when he offered up himself" (Heb. 7: 25, 27).

According to the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is made perfectly plain that the Old Testament sacrifices were typical of Christ's sacrifice and that they were all done away in Christ. The simplest Christian ought to know this. There is to be no more sacrifice for sin, and the Levitical priesthood has passed away forever, having been replaced by the eternal priesthood of Christ. The way of salvation through faith in the atonement procured by our Lord Jesus Christ is final and is the complete fulfillment of all the types and ceremonies which prefigured it in the Old Testament. To go back to the Old Testament economy is to revert to the weak and beggarly elements of this world and to substitute the shadow for the substance. Let me say in all serious-

ness that he who even contemplates a time when Jew or Gentile shall revert to the Mosaic ritual and the offering up of the blood of bulls and goats for the remission of sin, even though it be accomplished by faith in Christ, has virtually apostatized from Jesus Christ.[10]

No, we must not, we dare not, on pain of giving up our salvation, interpret these prophecies in this way. And if we are compelled to give up the first point we are compelled to give up the second. That is, if we cannot believe in the return to the Mosaic ritual, we cannot believe that the Scriptures teach that the Jews are to be restored to their land.

But how then are we to interpret these prophecies concerning the Jews and their land? Let the Word of God itself give the answer. In Ezek. 37: 25 we read: "And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children *forever*: and my servant *David* shall be their prince *forever*." The word "forever" prohibits us from taking this prophecy as requiring a literal fulfillment. The ultimate goal of God's people, according to the Bible, is heaven, therefore an endless earthly existence is impossible. We are compelled then to understand these words spiritually as referring to Christ's reign over His people now and in heaven. How else can we interpret them? If we interpret these words in an earthly way we come to a view that is contrary to Scripture. This amounts to a denial of Scripture.

This spiritual way of understanding the Old Testa-

[10] Scofield, in his reference Bible (p. 890) says: "Doubtless these offerings will be memorial, looking back to the cross, as the offerings under the old covenant were anticipatory, looking forward to the cross."

ment earthly promises is the way in which the Bible itself interprets them. Let us recall the promise of God to Abraham: "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12: 3). What does the New Testament say about this promise? "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed" (Acts 3:25). "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Gal. 3:8). Evidently these inspired utterances interpret the promises so as to include their fulfillment in the present gospel age.

But let us not stop here. Without comment I shall quote some Old Testament promises and the inspired New Testament interpretations of them: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal. 4: 5). "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come" (Matt. 11: 13-14). "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this" (Amos 9: 11-12). "James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David,

which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things" (Acts 15: 13-17).

No, the Bible gives us no earthly hope for either Jews or Gentiles. There is only one thing worth looking for, and that is the "Jerusalem which is above, which is free, and the mother of us all" (Gal. 4: 26).

The Jews as a nation will be saved but only in the way in which they are converted now. Some day they, with others from all nations and kindreds, shall acknowledge with true faith their Messiah and Savior.

Let all Christians now pray and labor for their conversion. The church can engage in no more glorious task, for to them "pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." (Rom. 9: 4-5).

V

THE MAN OF SIN

That man of sin . . . . the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God . . . . whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.—II THESS. 2: 3-4, 9

PATIENCE is a much needed virtue to one who looks for the glorious appearing of Christ. Why? Because the "Man of Sin" must appear before the end comes. Christ's coming hinges upon the manifestation of this monstrous evil figure.

But is not this strange? How can Christ's coming be looked upon as a blessed event when the Bible presents us with a view of ever darkening shadows and night in the appearing of the Antichrist? Yet, strange as it may seem, Christ's coming will be preceded by both blessing and apostasy. There is to be an ingathering and a falling away.

What, or who, is this Antichrist, this "man of sin," this "Son of Perdition," or this "lawless one," who must come before the Lord appears in heaven?

The word *antichrist* itself affords us some information. Anything that is opposed to Christ is anti-Christ.

The Apostle John declares that "he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ" is antichrist. In warning the disciples of Jesus against a coming antichrist, this same apostle reminded them that already there were many antichrists (I John 2:18, 22). He speaks also of a "spirit of antichrist" which lies underneath the denial of the true humanity of Christ and which he says is already in the world (I John 4: 3; II John 7). It is then permissible to say that any opposition to the person and work of Christ and any attempt to cast off His authority in the present and future is antichrist. It is evident that the present age is characterized by an antichrist temper and mind.

But is this all that is meant by Antichrist? Even John points to something far more. He makes us feel that he also has in mind some *personal embodiment* of opposition to Christ (see I John 2: 18).

And the Apostle Paul goes into the matter with more fulness. It is hard to see how the description he gives can be disassociated from a real and personal being. It will be well for us, before observing what Paul teaches, to take note of the way these Scriptures have been interpreted.

Many Christians have believed that the prophecies concerning the "Man of Sin" refer especially to the Church of Rome, or more particularly to the Papacy. This belief has been held not without reasons. Briefly put, the reason for identifying the Antichrist with the Roman Church as an institution are as follows: It is not necessary to understand the language of Paul as referring to a person, because Scripture often speaks of nations, institutions, and kingdoms, as individual personalities. This manner of speaking is seen in the Book of Daniel, where ten kings are made to stand

for ten kingdoms, or nations. And the time in which the Antichrist does his work is over such a long period that no one man can possibly live to accomplish it.

Moreover, the language used about the "man of sin" is appropriate only to a church or religious power. The designations, "man of sin" and "son of perdition," are religious words. The fact also that the Scriptures speak of the Antichrist as sitting in the "temple of God" indicates that he is connected with a church-persecuting power.

Furthermore, if the "man of sin" is a person, why would the Apostle Paul describe his coming as *after the working* of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders (II Thess. 2)? It is held, according to this view, that this is not the way in which worldly rulers gain their power. They rely upon force. But the papacy has attained to its power in just this way described by the Apostle, namely, by fraud and "by the deceivableness of unrighteousness."

For proof of this we are pointed to the Roman Church's use of forged documents and false pretences in order to achieve success in the world. There are the false claims that Peter was made primate over the whole church and vicar of Christ on earth; that he was the bishop of Rome; and that his successors in that office were his successors in his primacy. The pope, as the vicar of Christ, is held to be superior to all powers. He is lord of the conscience and has therefore the right to decide what is right and wrong for men in all their relations. Eternal perdition must be faced by anyone who fails to submit to the articles of belief decreed by the papacy. This, it is said, is the most fearful power ever assumed by sinful men. To this must be added the blasphemous claim to forgive sin. These and

other claims have no parallel in history and it is thought that no one in the future could be more pretentious than the Church of Rome.

And what of "signs and lying wonders"! They ever have been and still are among the chief supports of the papacy. There is not a false doctrine it teaches or a false assumption it makes that is not sustained by lying wonders. Its whole history is one of apparitions of the Virgin Mary, of saints, and of angels. Miracles of every possible description abound, from the most stupendous to the most absurd. While it is not denied that the Roman Church holds to many truths of the gospel, yet as a system it is characterized by falsehood and supported by deceit.

With Antichrist there is associated persecution. This, it is said, is true of the papacy. All know it has been drunk with the blood of saints. Persecution is even justified. By all means it will enforce its dominion, for it looks upon the suppression of every form of religion but its own as a solemn duty. What more can the people of God suffer than they have suffered at the hands of this ecclesiastical power? Witness the massacres by the Duke of Alva in the Netherlands; the horrors of the inquisition in Spain; and the massacre of St. Bartholomew in France. Over the last, Te Deums were sung in Rome.

It is also held that the description of the Antichrist by Paul, as one who was to oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God or is worshiped, is all true of the papacy. In the papacy is seen the practical operation of the system described. Do not popes claim the honor that is due to God alone? The highest tribute a creature can render the Creator is the surrender of the reason, the conscience, and the life to His authority.

This the popes claim to be their due from all mankind. By setting aside His Word, they exalt their authority above that of God. They call upon all men to place their faith not on what the Bible teaches but on what the church declares to be true. Here is undeniable proof that here is an antichristian power that puts itself in the place of God.

And when it is said, "the mystery of iniquity doth already work," it is interpreted as referring to the lust for power and the idea of the priesthood. The latter is looked upon as the leaven of iniquity which was already at work in New Testament times. By and by these ideas, partly pagan and partly Jewish, became concentrated in the elaborate ritualistic system of the papacy.

There are two difficult verses that are said to be easy to understand if the Antichrist be understood as the papacy. The verses read thus: "Now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [restrains] will let, until he be taken out of the way" (II Thess. 2: 6-7). The obstacle that is in the way of the development of the "Man of sin" was even then present, according to Paul. Only the Roman Government can fit into this picture. The only deterrent to Rome's sway is the temporal power and as long as this exists the church cannot rule the world.

These are the arguments given for identifying the Antichrist with the papacy. It is small wonder, knowing what we do of the Roman Catholic Church, that many students of the Word of God have made this identification. But as much as we respect this view, it is impossible to accept it in view of all the facts the Scriptures present in regard to the "man of sin."

What are the facts which the Bible presents about the Antichrist? At no point in the teaching of Scripture can we afford to go astray. It is therefore important that we be guided solely by the Word of God in any view we take of this matter before us.

We have already intimated that the Apostle Paul foretells more about the "man of sin" than any other Biblical writer. But we must remember that the prophecies of Daniel were before Paul, of which he was surely not ignorant. There are plain indications that he was not ignorant of the Book of Daniel.

It is natural for us to ask at this point, "What does Daniel say?" In a vision this prophet saw a beast with ten horns. Among these ten horns there came up another little horn in which little horn were "eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things" (Dan. 7:8). These ten horns Daniel takes as standing for ten kings. The little horn is interpreted as standing for one who "shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High" (Dan. 7: 25).

Daniel also saw a ram, which is pictured as "doing according to his will" (Dan. 8: 4). And the following description is significant indeed: "And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. . . . And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done" (Dan. 11: 31, 36).

Now, it must be admitted that Daniel's description

of this absolute, unsurpassable and ultra-blasphemous behavior may be applied to powers and forces that are not personal or individual, because the language employed is highly symbolic and figurative. Yet it would be carrying things too far to say that it cannot apply to an individual. In fact there are things said that point to an actual single being. For instance, Daniel saw four great beasts, which stand for kingdoms, but these take on a personal aspect because Daniel tells us they are "four kings." The first king of Greece is represented by a shaggy goat (Dan. 8: 22-26), and a king is said to stand up in which concrete person the wickedness is brought to a climax (8: 23).

This prophet also saw "one like the Son of man," to whom was given dominion and glory which shall not pass away (Dan. 7: 13-14). This certainly looks like an actual living personality. Moreover, what is said in this prophecy of the little horn is hard to understand apart from an individual. It reads thus: "and it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced, and prospered" (Dan. 8: 10-12).

All in all, then, as we read these portions of the Book of Daniel, there is the feeling that what is said cannot easily be applied to a human power no matter how extensive and powerful. We seem to be faced with something that is above the ordinary, with a concrete embodiment.

To see how close the Apostle Paul approaches the teaching of Daniel we need only to quote his words: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. . . . And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (II Thess. 2:3-4, 6-10). The similarities between the two descriptions are apparent.

On reading Paul's description it is hard to escape the conviction that what is presented to us is a personal human leader who is to appear in the world of history. In fact it is difficult to make his words lend themselves to any other interpretation.

Now, who will be the "man of sin"? Will the "Son of Perdition" be a Jewish false messiah? He cannot be that because he would then need to act like Christ, the true Messiah. But his whole bearing is altogether different. He will oppose and exalt himself above God. There is nothing truly religious about him although to serve his purpose he may at times appear that way.

Will he then be some pagan figure? But there is no

idea of political organization, nor of political persecution, in what Paul says of him. He will rather work along the lines of religious and moral seduction even if he is not a religious personage himself. To be sure he will lead astray his followers from the truth of the gospel, for the names, "The Man of Sin," "Man of unrighteousness," "the Lawless one," indicate that his field of activity will be opposed to the truth. Sin and unrighteousness will in him be concentrated.

Will the "man of sin" be Satan himself? While the description of Paul breathes a satanic atmosphere, yet he cannot be Satan because we are told that his "coming is according to the working of Satan." He will act *like* Satan and pretend to be God himself.

For a right understanding of this awful personage we should pay particular attention to these words of Paul's description: "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is *called God, or that is worshiped.*" We are given to see that the "man of sin" will not be a religious figure at all. He will be against all that is "called God." Not only will he oppose the true God, but all that has to do with God or the idea of God. And not only will he be opposed to true worship, but any and every form of worship. He will be anti-religious par excellence. This certainly cannot be said of the Pope of Rome, for while his opposition is to the truth of the gospel of Christ, he is still a religious figure. However, it is true that a religious figure or movement may in the course of time become anti-religious, but then it becomes something entirely different from what we know of it. That possibility exists for, as is well known, the modern anti-religious movement in Germany began with a religious opposition to

the Christian faith in the form of the higher criticism of the Bible.

The wickedness of this evil person is portrayed as consisting in his blasphemy against God and his making himself as God. Sin has not gone farther than it will go in him.

The "Son of Perdition" will come at the end of an apostasy the like of which the world has never seen. The flame of rebellion against God he will fan until it will issue in a world conflagration of awful wickedness. The Lord through him will send the world a working of error, so that men will believe a lie. This departure from "the love of the truth" will be met by God with certain destruction.

But there are many things we would like to know about this lawless figure which we are not privileged to know. If we begin to speculate we must remember that we do so at our own risk. We do not know whence and how this personal head of wickedness will enter upon the scene of his activities. Being a man, will he be born as a man, and when will he take up his work of iniquity?

What also is the "restraint" and "restrainer" which was keeping back the Antichrist at the time Paul wrote his letter to the Thessalonians? If this "restraint" be the Roman Empire, then the "Man of Sin" would be some Jewish figure, but we have seen that the picture far surpasses any false messiah. Somehow what the Thessalonians knew is more than we can gather, and as much as we may regret this it is the path of wisdom to continue to profess our ignorance. We do know, however, that finally, "the Lord Jesus shall slay [him] with the breath of his mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of his coming."

It would be nothing short of a calamity if we now lost sight of the reasons for the inspired Apostle's disclosure concerning the "man of sin" to the Christians of his day. In his First Epistle to the Thessalonians he holds out to his readers the great prospect of the coming of the Redeemer. What a comfort this truth was to them! They were suffering for their faith, and when the Lord Jesus should come all their sorrows would end. And those who in the meantime had fallen asleep would not lose their part in the blessing of the parousia (I Thess. 4: 15-17).

Yet this glorious and wonderful truth was perverted and misinterpreted by some who were "disorderly, working not at all," and withal "busybodies." They unsettled the minds of the people, turning them away from their present duties, as though the day of the Lord were at hand. It was to correct this abuse of the truth that Paul wrote this Second Letter.

The Thessalonians were told very plainly that they should not be deceived. The great day of deliverance had not yet come, nor was it just at hand. They had still much to do and suffer, and therefore they were not to be over-eager or over-anxious. He had said to them before, "Of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (I Thess. 5: 1-2). They were plainly told that Christ would come when least expected and were also to bear in mind that some great events would yet take place. One great event that must precede the appearing of Christ was the coming of the "man of sin." He said, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son

of perdition." In other words, if they were distracted (as they were) when they believed in the second coming of Christ, they were henceforth to compose themselves, and if the truth caused them to be impatient, they were to be calm, for the events that were still future made the delay of Christ's coming certain.

No doubt many of Paul's readers understood him, and let us hope that many who read his words today will have the humility to give earnest heed.

It is, however, a sad truth that many today are not affected at all by the words of the Apostle. They say it is impossible for them to look for the Lord's coming if there are still things that must happen before He comes. If the gospel must be preached to all the nations, the Jews as a people converted, and the Antichrist appear before Christ comes, they can have no interest in looking for His appearing. They do not know how they can any longer watch and pray.

We can only say to all those of this mind that they have not risen to the heights of the New Testament faith in the second coming of Christ. It is as certain as anything can be that the disciples of the Lord and the Christians of New Testament times believed that these things must come to pass before Christ's coming and yet they watched and waited and prayed longingly for His revelation from heaven. Why, then, cannot our faith in the glorious second coming of Christ be as strong as theirs, that even though He tarries yet will we pray, "EVEN SO, COME LORD JESUS"?

Finally, in view of the coming apostasy and wickedness which shall culminate in the "man of sin," we can be certain of one thing—that evil will continue to the very end. No reign of complete righteousness will precede the second advent. Any hope of a converted

and sinless world before the parousia is doomed to disappointment.

But shall we despair? Not at all. Christ is king. His sovereign sway cannot be frustrated by all the forces of evil. Even with increasing wickedness His cause and kingdom will abound more and more (I Cor. 15: 24).

There must be no retreat or laying down of arms in the battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. When the Lord comes the Christian should be found doing his duty in the light of God's Word. And with eyes looking upward to a coming Savior, he should maintain hope to the end (I Pet. 1:13).

VI

WILL THERE BE A MILLENNIUM?

For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.—I Cor. 15:25

Who in Christian circles, at some time or another, has not heard this question asked: "Do you believe in the millennium?" Suppose the answer is "No." Then he who makes such a negative reply is said to be an unbeliever in the second coming of Christ. Now, we ask, is this true? What has the blessed hope of the glorious appearing of the Savior to do with a millennium? One may, it is true, believe in Christ's coming and in a millennium, but it is simply unjust and untrue to say that one must believe in a millennium in order to believe in the second coming.

Yet the question of the millennium is an important one. I shall not in this sermon treat it lightly nor regard it as an inconsequential matter of belief. Any matter of faith is important. The glory of God and the welfare of men's souls is involved in whatever is believed. That which God has revealed in the Bible we must believe, but if we believe anything that the Word of God does not teach we sin. Is it not just as sinful to add to the Scriptures as it is to take away

from them? If then the Bible teaches a millennium we must believe it, but if not, we should renounce it with all our souls.

Before we go any further we want to know what is meant by a millennium. The answer is very simple. It is a period of a thousand years. But the word "millennium, has come to mean more than just a thousand years. It is commonly referred to as a time of great joy, prosperity, and righteousness in this world that will be brought about by the bodily reign of Christ on the earth, or by His control over the earth through His Spirit.

Now is the time for us to present two questions. The first is, "Will there be a millennium before Christ comes?" and the second is, "Will there be a millennium after Christ comes?" We shall deal with these two questions in order.

Will there be a millennium before the second coming of Christ? There is a clear answer to this question.

In the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares narrated by our Lord (Matt. 13: 24-30; 36-43) we are given to see that the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in his field. While he slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat. As a result tares grew up with the wheat. When the harvest came the wheat was preserved but the tares were burned. The explanation Jesus gave is that the wheat are the children of the kingdom sowed by the Son of man in the world and the tares are the children of the wicked one. At the harvest, or the end of the world, the tares will be gathered and burned and the righteous preserved "in the kingdom of their Father."

Here it is plainly taught that before Christ comes

good and evil continue together in the world. While the Lord is calling out a people for His name from all kindreds and tribes, the forces of evil are working and growing and will continue to do so until the Lord Himself shall come to execute judgment.

And where could there be a plainer declaration of growing wickedness that is to mark the course of this world than is found in that passage of the Bible dealing with the "man of sin" (II Thess. 2: 1-10)? There it is plainly taught that the day of Christ shall not come "except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed." The world instead of facing an era of complete righteousness is headed for a time of growing wickedness but not to the exclusion of gospel progress.

Let one read the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew. In this great prophecy of Jesus the time before the end is pictured in dark and somber colors. There will be wars, tribulations, and rumors of wars.

The fact that the Scriptures do not appear to predict a period of universal reign of righteousness prior to the coming of the Lord does not exclude the possibility of a period of unprecedented prosperity for the kingdom of God upon earth prior to the coming of the Lord. But from what the Scriptures say we ought to be convinced that days of bliss and paradise are not to precede the second coming of Christ.

We are ready then for our second question: Will there be a millennium after Christ's coming? In other words, will the second coming of Christ usher in a millennial era of perfection, or sinlessness, in this world? There is only one way to be clear in our minds about this and that is to examine carefully those pas-

sages of the Word of God where a millennium is supposed to be taught. Let us face these passages fairly and squarely. Here is the place to throw away all prejudice and to handle the Word of God in all sincerity and truth.

Is the millennium taught in these words of the Apostle Paul: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Cor. 15: 22-26). I ask again, is a millennium taught in these verses?

Certainly the word "millennium," or the words "thousand years," are not specifically mentioned, but is the idea taught nevertheless? If Paul here teaches that there will be one resurrection of believers when Christ comes and another or second resurrection of unbelievers at some other time, it is possible to place a millennium, or a thousand years, between these two separate resurrections. The whole idea of a millennium in this passage hinges upon the alleged teaching of two resurrections. There is no room for it otherwise.

But we search in vain for two resurrections, one for believers and another for unbelievers, in these words of Paul. Whatever Paul might teach about the resurrection of unbelievers, he certainly does not have anything to say about that here. He has believers in mind only. The point he is making is that as there can be no quickening apart from Christ, so there is no dying outside of Adam. Men die only in Adam and are made alive

only in Christ. Are unbelievers made alive "in Christ" too? Nothing could be more alien to the Apostle's teaching than such an idea. Whenever he uses the phrase "in Christ" he never includes unbelievers. None but believers are said to be "in Christ" in the whole of the Pauline teaching. Since then Paul is speaking of believers only, the orders of the resurrection are but two, namely, Christ, and they who are Christ's. There is no hint even of another resurrection of unbelievers to follow after the resurrection of those who are Christ's. Hence any notion of a period of time in this world between these resurrections must be given up.

But why, it may be asked, does Paul speak of Christ's resurrection? Whatever the reason might be, it is impossible to exclude Him from the orders of the resurrection. However, may it not be that some of the Corinthians thought the resurrection of believers ought to take place soon after their death, for did not Christ rise soon after He was buried? With the words "each in his own order" Paul would caution his readers. Believers would not rise until Christ comes, but Christ's resurrection must follow without delay, for He is the "firstfruits" and believers belong to the harvest.

After speaking of the resurrection of believers at Christ's coming, Paul said, "Then cometh the end." When will the end come? Does he mean to imply by these words that the end will come a thousand years after the resurrection of believers? Now, the word "then" does not necessarily remove the event to which it refers by a long period of time, for in the fifth verse of this chapter we are told that after Christ's resurrection He was seen of Cephas, "*then* of the twelve." This does not mean that a thousand years had elapsed between His being seen of Cephas and the twelve.

How soon after the resurrection of believers the end will come we do not know, but it is certain that at Christ's coming He will not begin to subdue His enemies upon the earth. Paul's words will not bear such a thought. He plainly says that the *last* enemy to be conquered is *death* (vs. 26). There can be no more enemies to conquer after the *last.* The time of the conquering of this last enemy, he placed at the coming of Christ and the resurrection of believers. We have unmistakable proof of this in the statements of Paul that when believers are raised at Christ's coming, thus putting on immortality, then "Death is swallowed up in victory" (see verses 23, 54).

Now, if the *last enemy* will be conquered when Christ comes, the other enemies would have been subjugated before His coming. His parousia marks the end of His conquests and not the beginning of them. And should we desire to know when Christ's conquests began, we shall find that Paul's teaching is that they began with His crucifixion and resurrection. At that time, Paul says, Christ "spoiled principalities and powers, made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2: 15).

It is also to be noted that the trump that is to be blown for the resurrection of believers is the "last trump" (I Cor. 15: 52). Will this world still hear other trumps calling forth the dead, if at Christ's coming the last, or final trump, is sounded? Impossible. Therefore, if on the face of Paul's teaching in I Corinthians 15 there is no room for another and separate resurrection of unbelievers, all notions of a millennium between two resurrections must be given up, at least as far as this particular chapter is concerned.

But let us continue to look for a millennium. Per-

chance it may be found elsewhere in the New Testament. Let us see if it is to be found in I Thess. 4: 13-18. Here the Apostle Paul told the Thessalonian Christians not to sorrow concerning their dead as those who have no hope. He offered comfort to them in the following words: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep" (vss. 14-15).

It is proper to ask, What was it that the Thessalonians were sorrowing about? Was it because they were afraid that the departed saints would not be raised at Christ's coming and so miss the millennial reign of Christ in this world? Were they fearful that believers who had died would have to wait for another resurrection at the end of the millennium? There is nothing in the words of Paul in this passage to indicate any such thing. What Paul said is that the Thessalonians were given to sorrowing over their dead as the pagans do who have no hope. That is, the same reasons that make the pagans hopeless with respect to their dead made the Thessalonians to be without hope too. But Paul assured them that they did have hope as Christians. However, the sad thing about it all was that they did not have the hope which properly belonged to them as believers in Christ. They seemed to have nothing to lean on at all, when there was much comfort for them. It may appear strange to us to hear of Christians in such a hopeless state of mind with regard to a resurrection, but that Christians could be hopeless and doubting and stand in need of encouragement is seen from the way in which Paul spoke to the Corinthians on this same

subject. He said to them, "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (I Cor. 15: 12).

Now, if the Thessalonians even had a hope of a resurrection for their sainted dead after a thousand years, that would be some hope. But the Apostle Paul did not think they exhibited any hope at all. He therefore assured them that believers who have died will rise at Christ's coming because Jesus died and rose again.

Paul did not, when he said that the living at the coming of the Lord will "not prevent those which are asleep," mean to imply that there are to be two arrivals at the presence of the Lord. There is nothing in his words to indicate that he had such an idea in mind at all. All that the Apostle actually said is that in gaining the presence of the Lord the dead would not be one moment behind the living, and not only would they be changed, but they would share in all the glories of the parousia.

There is then no hint of a millennium in these passages of the New Testament we have thus far examined. If we are to be convinced that the Scriptures teach a doctrine of a millennium there must be clear instruction concerning it in the plain statements of the apostles. Not only is this lacking, but we have observed that this doctrine is positively excluded in those passages where it is sought for most. And we shall find that in other passages in the apostolic teaching where a millennium is supposed to be found, the plain statements contained in them will not bear it out.

But where do people get the belief in an earthly millennium after Christ comes? Since there is only one

place in the Bible where there is mention made of a "thousand years," it must be that the belief is derived from that particular passage. Let me therefore quote the passage in the Bible where this "thousand years" occurs. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a *thousand years*. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the *thousand years* were finished. This is the first resurrection" (Rev. 20: 4-5).

Do these words in the Book of Revelation teach an earthly millennium after the coming of Christ? If they do, then the book of Revelation teaches something that is not expressly taught elsewhere in the entire Bible. But that should be no objection to believing in a millennium provided it can be plainly shown that the Book of Revelation does actually teach this doctrine. Let us therefore impartially examine the passage of Scripture before us.

First of all, we should bear in mind that this book of the Bible is a symbolic book. Anyone who begins to read its pages is made aware of that fact immediately. In the very first chapter of the book we are told that John, on the Isle of Patmos, saw seven candlesticks in the midst of which there was one like unto the Son of Man. And we are told that He was "clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as the flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass,

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as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

It will readily be seen that here we are in a world of symbols and figures. The Holy Spirit does not mean for us to believe that Christ actually looked the way He is described. Are we prepared to believe that there really proceeded out of the mouth of Christ a real two-edged sword? If that is the kind of faith we have, we display a kind of faith that is dishonoring to the Word of God. A person who interprets this part of the Bible in such a fashion will understand Christ's saying, "I am the door," as referring to Himself as a real door of some house. When such a believer reads in the Bible that God hides His children under His wings, he will understand that to mean that God has feathers. It sounds sacrilegious, but that is just what people do when they insist that figurative and symbolic language of the Bible must be taken literally. May God save us from such ignorance!

The first lesson to be learned by any reader of the Bible is that it should be interpreted as its Author intended it to be understood and not as we would like to have it. Certainly figures of speech are meant by God to be taken as such.

Not forgetting that we are looking into a book of figures and symbols, through which it is the purpose of God to declare His gospel to men, let us now attempt an understanding of this portion of it that speaks of a thousand years (chapter 20). It is well to begin with chapter 19. At verse 11 of this chapter we see the Word of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

who is called Faithful and True, coming out of heaven riding upon a white horse. There follow Him armies of heaven also upon white horses. Then an angel appears who calls the birds of the air to feast upon the corpses of kings, generals, and all men high and low. A fierce battle is raging in which the beasts and kings of the earth are arrayed against the host that has come out of heaven. The outcome of it is that the enemies of God are slain while the birds of heaven are filled upon their carcasses.

This is a great battle. But who with any common sense and respect for the intent of Scripture will say that this is a literal war on this earth? This is a symbolical battle through and through. How do we know this? Because in verses 15 and 21 we are told that the fighting was done with a sword that proceeded from the mouth of the Word of God. This points out to us that it is a contest achieved by the spoken word. Can any battle that is won in this manner be a literal battle? And should we ask ourselves the question, "What is that word that conquers?" the answer can be nothing else but the gospel of Christ. The simplest reading of the New Testament will give us that answer.

Not only in chapter 19 but over and over again in the Book of Revelation, Christ in His state of exaltation is pictured as a victorious conqueror (see 6: 2). How similar is this picture of John to the teaching of Paul, who also views Christ in His present state as the overcomer of all His and His people's enemies (I Cor. 15: 24-26; Col. 2: 15)!

We go on to chapter 20. After this spiritual victory we are introduced to another scene. War and strife are not altogether absent, but it is on the whole a peaceful scene. Satan is bound by an angel. The saints, having

been beheaded for Jesus' sake, are in a state of blessedness for a thousand years. Let us face the question now. Does this refer to a thousand years of blessedness on this earth? First of all, let us make sure that the mention of a thousand years in a book of the Bible in which numbers are again and again used symbolically is to be taken literally. Can we be positively certain about it?

But we should not fail to see in the very words before us that here is not an earthly scene at all, because those who participate in this reign of Christ are said to be "*souls*" "that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus." Are souls fitted for a life on earth?

This life of souls is also spoken of as the "first resurrection." To what conclusion are we led? Since the language is not adaptable to an earthly state, it can only be a picture of the spiritual existence of all who are now in heaven with Jesus, for where do souls live and reign with Christ but in heaven? (see John 11: 25).

It would be profitable and edifying to continue with the symbolism of this Book to the reading of which God has promised blessing. I am sorry that we cannot do so now. However, I hope that we may have seen that from chapter 19: 11 to 20: 1-10 there is presented to us two pictures. One of them is of the strife of God against His enemies and the other is the peace of God's saints in heaven. How beautiful this all is! We should never tire looking at it. May God sanctify our imaginations that we might see it in all its beauty and glory.

If we read on we shall find that there follows a picture of judgment, in which the righteous and wicked partake, for the book of life is opened. And beginning

with chapter 21 we have a picture of the kingdom of God in heaven full of bliss and glory.

What a beautiful whole the Bible is! The picture in the Book of Revelation is the same as that which is told to us in unsymbolical language by the Apostle Paul. Jesus Christ now reigns. All saints who have died reign with Him in glory. He is winning the victory, and at His glorious coming He will completely conquer Satan and destroy death, at which time He will also deliver up the kingdom to His Father that God may be all and in all.

One thing is certain—the Book of Revelation and the rest of the Bible do not teach that the saints will come back to this earth to engage in battle or to reign upon an earthly throne. A fire from heaven will destroy Satan, and not the armed conflict of the children of God (Rev. 20: 7-10).

It is repulsive to the Christian consciousness, in the light of the promises of the gospel, to think that once Christ's children have been raised from the dead at Christ's coming they will trail through the blood and mire of an earthly battlefield or sit even upon an earthly throne. To desire such an existence is not Christian, for it is to seek the beggarly elements of this world rather than those things which are above.

After Christ comes, the saints of God will be ever with the Lord, free from all sin and sorrow. What more should they desire? Brethren, let us look for that day and pray, "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

VII

AFTER DEATH — WHAT ?

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.
—Rev. 14: 13

WHAT happens after death is to the world a mystery. It is not so to faith that rests on the revelation of God in His Word. To believe on God's authority is not a leap into the dark but is a great certainty. God cannot lie.

What happens after death? We know the body is placed in the grave and moulders in the dust. But what happens to the soul?

Does the soul go into a state of unconsciousness, or as some call it, "sleep"? It is true the Bible does speak of death as a "sleep" and of dying as "falling asleep." Paul speaks of dead Christians as being "asleep in Jesus" (I Thess. 4: 14) and our Lord said of Lazarus, who was dead, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth" (John 11: 11, 13). (See also Acts 13: 36; I Cor. 11: 30.) But what does the Bible mean by this? We cannot say the Bible teaches that at death souls are in a state of unconsciousness because it uses the word

"sleep" to describe death. It is well known that a word may mean more or less than appears on the surface of it. The meaning of this word must be determined by its use in the Bible.

According to the New Testament the early Christians did not believe that their loved ones who had passed away were unconscious and would so continue to the day of Christ's coming. Not only is such a view not taught in the Bible but it is positively excluded by its plain teaching. Paul said, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked" (II Cor. 5: 1-3). Here the Apostle desires to be clothed with the heavenly body which shall be his at the resurrection. However, should he die and remain without the resurrection body he would be found naked. There is plainly a difference between these two states, that of "being clothed" and that of "being naked," but the important thing to bear in mind is that Paul knew he would after death be aware of the difference between being clothed with a body and being naked without a body. He could not possibly have looked upon the state after death prior to the resurrection as a state of nakedness if he would at the time of his nakedness know nothing about it. And when he would receive a body, how could he say that it was a state of "being clothed upon" if he did not know that he was in a state of nakedness before? Those who are in an unconscious state do not know the difference between one state and another, because all things are alike to them. But to Paul, even to be disrobed, that is,

to have a spirit only, was to be for him a conscious experience.

Furthermore, Paul was certain that should he die before Christ came and thus be found in the unclothed or naked state, he would be at home with the Lord (II Cor. 5: 8). How could he have looked forward to being at home with the Lord and have encouraged others with this bright prospect if he merely believed in a state of unconsciousness after death? To be at home with the Lord would then certainly not be a prospect of joy at all. Such a state would be less than he had already. But as a matter of fact he looked upon departing and being with Christ as being not less but "far better" (Phil. 1: 23). To depart into a state of unconsciousness could not be better.

The only way in which a person can make a distinction between "worse" and "better" is in consciousness. Death cannot be a better state than the present if in it all awareness is gone.

Now, it is true something will be missing at death. The Apostle Paul made it clear that we shall not have this body and that our tabernacle from heaven will be wanting. Yet for all that, death will be a glorious, conscious existence, even if it does not reach the height of blessedness that will be the portion of believers at the resurrection.

It cannot but be then, that when the early Christians spoke of their dead as being put to sleep, all they had in mind was the position in which their dead were placed in the grave and the relation they sustain to this world. Like those who sleep, the dead lie in a recumbent position. As a child is put to bed, so lovingly and tenderly did believers in the Lord Jesus put their dear ones in the grave with the confidence that their

spirits were with the Lord. They were asleep, but only with reference to this world, that is, they had no awareness of this life, but with reference to the other world they were fully alive.

So important is this truth that it is well for us to establish it more firmly in our minds. The Lord Jesus Christ tells us in Luke (chapter sixteen) of a rich man and a beggar by the name of Lazarus who begged crumbs from the rich man's table. The beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and went to hell, where "he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom" (vs. 23). The important thing to note here is that both were conscious after death. What is said of them could not have been said if they were in an unconscious state. The idea of consciousness underlies the whole parable. It would have no meaning without it.

Neither would the words of Jesus to the repentant thief on the cross, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23: 43) have any meaning of comfort if unconsciousness was what awaited him.

The Scriptures are unmistakably plain on this matter and no believer need grope in the dark. Christians in all ages have always cherished the truth of God's Holy Word so remarkably put in the following words of the Westminster Shorter Catechism: "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves, till the resurrection" (p. 37). Let us rest assured that Christ will never leave, even for a moment, those for whom He died.

There are strong ties that bind us to our loved ones, and when they are taken from us in God's good providence we still feel at one with them. The church militant and the church triumphant are one. There is a communion of saints which transcends this world. But while recognizing the oneness of all the people of God in earth and heaven, we should be careful not to venture out into the territory in which there are no pointers from the Word of God to show us the way.

Much harm has come to many souls because liberties have been taken which the Word of God does not allow. How many poor souls have been beguiled into the snare of talking with the dead! There are sects today that hold seances with the dead. The dead are supposed to return and talk with the living, but for all this there is no Scriptural warrant.

The dead are "asleep." What does this imply but that the dead are not alive to this earthly life? And if they are not alive to this world, it is out of place to seek to talk with them. This Scriptural representation ought to be enough to deter any devout soul from ever attempting to communicate with the world of the departed.

Neither do the Scriptures anywhere tell us that the dead know anything of what is happening in this world. We often say, "If so and so knew what is going on, how pleased or sad he, or she, would be." True, if he knew, much would grieve him and much would cause him to rejoice. But if we believe they do know what is going on here, we do so on our own responsibility, because the Scriptures are silent. Not even these words in Heb. 12: 1 warrant the positive conclusion of knowledge of our life on the part of the dead: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a

cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." The Old Testament saints encompass us and are witnesses of our race of faith, the Apostle says, but we are not required from the words themselves to interpret them in a literal sense. We cannot definitely say that the Apostle meant them so to be taken, when full justice can be done to these words by interpreting them as meaning that we ought to have in memory the example of the witnesses and be aware of all that men of faith have done and taught in the past, for as they stand out in history they are looking down upon us.

The departed saints are pictured in the Word of God as having their rest in God. They now have the mind of God on all things. Their blessedness is perfect, and if they know anything of this life they could not be made sad or more happy. Being alive only to the things of heaven, they are enrapt with those things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Now, we are not to think from what has been said that the departed saints do not know each other in heaven. Most emphatically, they do. One day in the life of our Lord He was transfigured upon a high mountain. There appeared then Moses and Elias, who talked with Him. Later, these two Old Testament saints returned to heaven. Are we to suppose that they lost their identity and ceased to be Moses and Elias in heaven? And are we to think that when they appeared to our Lord they did not know each other and continued so in heaven? There is no hint of such a gloomy view to be found in the Bible. Let all those who have been troubled by the wisdom of men in this matter take their assurance and comfort from the Word of God. The

heaven of God will increase beyond degree the joys which have been ours in relationship with those we love, and not diminish them.

Those who die in Jesus not only know each other in heaven but they know what took place in this life. It is from this world that the saints have gone to heaven, and they are well aware of all things they have experienced. Parents recognize and know their children, and all that happened between them will not be erased from their memories. Even the sad things that have transpired here will not be lost but will be swallowed up of life through Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. The Bible does not teach otherwise. It sets forth the unity of this life with that which is to come. Paul, in urging Christians to a life of holiness, pointed to the completion in heaven of the work of sanctification going on here. He said, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4: 13).

A gloriously blessed state is the state of the redeemed in Christ Jesus. A voice from heaven gives us this assurance. It said to the Apostle John, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Their delights and joys are beyond comparison. How often do the weary saints of earth long to be present with their Lord and join the church triumphant! But if at death the Christian enters into happiness, how much greater and higher will his degree of blessedness be when the Lord comes from heaven! Then the soul will be clothed with the new glorified heavenly body. Then redemption will be complete. Oh, what a glorious day that will be!

Now we turn to a dreadful teaching of God's Word, but nevertheless a true teaching. As the saints in heaven rejoice in the spirit, so those who are assigned to hell suffer now in the spirit. It is real torment for them just as it is now real bliss for the redeemed. But the torment of the wicked will yet be greater when they will be united with their bodies at the resurrection. Then they will suffer in soul and body forever. Our Lord said, "Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10: 28). Again and again He sounded this note of warning to sinners. None of His words have any meaning if His words in regard to hell do not mean what they plainly declare. How can we trust Him when He offers to us His mercy if we will not believe His words in regard to the just punishment of the impenitent? Of all things He tells us to fear it is a hell to come. He said, again, "And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell" (Matt. 5: 29).

And that which will add to the torments of hell will be the remembrance in it of this life. The rich man in hell remembered, only too well he remembered, what happened here. Abraham said to him in the parable of Jesus, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented" (Luke 16: 25). He also remembered that he had five brethren and asked that Lazarus be sent to testify to them (see verses 27-28). To deny this doctrine is openly and flagrantly to boast against God. It is to set oneself up as more righteous than He. "Shall mortal man be more

just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?" (Job 4: 17).

But if some men cannot go so far as altogether to deny this doctrine, since the Scripture plainly teaches retribution for the wicked, they seek a way out of explicit Bible declarations by convincing themselves that while it will be bad for the wicked, it will not be so bad. They say that the wicked will have an opportunity to be converted after death. An opportunity will be given to all who have not repented in this life to repent after death, they assert. Sometimes those who believe and proclaim such an error offer Scripture proof for it, but the devil can quote Scripture for his purpose. There are many about these days who are adept at handling the Word of God deceitfully.

But what Scriptural proof is there for this notion that is so out of accord with the teaching of Scripture in general? Let us be fair and look at the Scripture passages that are supposed to teach another chance for those in hell. The passages offered are I Pet. 3: 18-21 and 4: 6. They read as follows: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison: which sometime were disobedient when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. . . . For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that

are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

First of all, it needs to be said that the meaning of this passage has been much disputed. It is very dangerous and unsound to found a doctrine that is so far-reaching and so at variance with the rest of Scripture upon a passage that is difficult and whose meaning is hard to ascertain. Certainly there is no direct statement asserting that those in hell have a saving gospel preached to them or that any in hell are actually saved.

As we look closely into these words, what seems to be foremost is a preaching to spirits in the days of Noah at which time eight souls were saved by water. This reference is plainly to Noah's time and the flood. Now if the meaning is that those saved were saved while dead, why should this special privilege be granted to the dead in Noah's time, since they were examples of extreme wickedness? It is not what we would ordinarily expect. But even if we suppose that the dead of Noah's time had the gospel preached to them and eight were saved (which of course is not expressly taught), still there would not be sufficient ground for believing that all the dead since that time had the gospel preached to them or that all who will yet die will hear the gospel while dead.

Now, as a matter of fact, the "spirits in prison" cannot mean the dead, for we are told that the gospel was preached to the generation of Noah's time before their death. It was *while the ark was a preparing* that this preaching took place. There is not even an intimation that the preaching was done beyond this time.

What the passage does seem to teach is that Christ in the Spirit (for He existed before He came to the world in the flesh) declared His gospel to those in Noah's

time. Since "spirits in prison" refers to those who are alive it may be a way of describing living sinners bound in the fetters of sin. But even if the "spirits in prison" is a reference to the dead, as when Peter says the gospel was preached to the dead (see I Pet. 4: 6), the Apostle cannot mean that the dead had the gospel preached to them while dead. The reason for this is that in the preceding verse (vs. 5) he says that Christ is ready to judge the living and the dead. Plainly the dead whom Christ is ready to judge at His coming, while spoken of as dead, will not be dead when Christ judges them. They are indeed spoken of as dead, but what is said about them takes place when they are alive. So when the Apostle speaks of the dead as having the gospel preached to them he means the dead who were dead at the time in which he was speaking, but what he says about them, namely, having the gospel preached to them, took place when the dead were alive. We ourselves often talk in this fashion, as when we say so and so (having in mind a person now dead) was present on a particular occasion. We do not mean by this to give the impression that he was present while dead; rather it is understood that even though he is dead, what we are saying of him took place while he was alive.

It is abundantly plain to any earnest enquirer that the thought of a gospel preaching to those in a dead state must be read into this Scripture passage. It cannot honestly be used as a support for the hope of a second probation. It is therefore necessary for us to interpret these words in accord with the rest of Scripture.

What shall we say then happens after death? It is plain that the Scriptures bear out the doctrine believed by Christians in all ages, namely, that after death is the

judgment, and that between death and the judgment there is immediate blessedness in the presence of God for the righteous and immediate torments in hell for the wicked.

Do men want one to return from the grave to witness to these things before they will believe? It is true now as it was in the days of the Lord Jesus that if men will not believe Moses and the prophets they will not be persuaded though one rose from the dead (see Luke 16: 23).

As the tree falls, so it lies. There will be no passing from one state to another in the other world. A great impassable gulf separates the righteous from the wicked in the land beyond the river. No purgatory or satisfaction for sin on the part of the living for the dead can avail.

Christ alone made the sacrifice that saves a sinner from hell. His was a perfect and efficacious sacrifice, and all for whom He died He will bring to glory. What else is salvation if it is not deliverance from untold punishment which man has incurred because of sin? It was a great and mighty work which He accomplished on the accursed tree.

Now only is the day of mercy. Today is the day of salvation. Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. Be warned if you turn away from His grace.

VIII

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.—Acts 17: 31

God has pledged Himself to judge the world in righteousness. What God purposes, that He always performs.

Let no one think that when God makes known to men that His judgment upon the world will mean wrath and destruction for sinful men that He will show anger as sinful men vent their passions. Surely the day of judgment will mean wrath and destruction for all wicked men and angels but it will all be in accordance with perfect holiness, righteousness, wisdom, and love. Neither justice nor love will in the least be violated in that great transaction.

We are told that God will judge the world on an appointed day. How solemn a day it will be! The Lord Jesus Christ said, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess

unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7: 22, 24).

All will be brought to light on that day. The Apostle Paul tells us that "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (I Cor. 3: 13).

That day will be brought in when Christ comes. In saying this I am aware that some will take violent exception. However, all that is necessary is to set before you the clear words of Scripture. The rest I must leave to your good judgment. I submit to you the following passages: "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until *the Lord come,* who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (I Cor. 4: 5). "For the Son of man *shall come* in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt. 16: 17). "And then shall they see the *Son of man coming* in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven" (Mark 13: 26-27). "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13: 41-42). "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (II Tim. 4: 8).

Not only will the day of judgment be brought in when Christ comes, but His coming will also bring with

it the resurrection of just and unjust. This also some shallow Bible students of our day will deny. It may not be amiss to be reminded again of these words of the Apostle Paul: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3: 20-21). And of these familiar words in I Corinthians: "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (15: 23, 51-52).

That at Christ's coming the dead will be raised and men judged is the historic position of the Christian church. The Westminster Larger Catechism in answer to the question, "What are we to believe concerning the resurrection?" says, "We are to believe, that, at the last day, there shall be a general resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust: when they that are then found alive shall in a moment be changed; and the selfsame bodies of the dead which are laid in the grave, being then again united to their souls forever, shall be raised up by the power of Christ. The bodies of the just, by the Spirit of Christ, and by virtue of his resurrection as their head, shall be raised in power, spiritual, and incorruptible, and made like to his glorious body: and the bodies of the wicked shall be raised up in dishonor by him as an offended judge."

And the question following is, "What shall immediately follow after the resurrection?" The answer given is: "Immediately after the resurrection shall fol-

low the general and final judgment of the angels and men: the day and hour whereof no man knoweth, that all may watch and pray, and be ever ready for the coming of the Lord."

These are wonderful statements. They are every bit true to the Bible. There seem to be men in these days who can sit down and in one hour formulate a creed on the whole range of Christian truth. They think they can do what it has taken many men and centuries to accomplish. The trouble with these mushroom creeds is not that they are of recent origin but that they are not true to Scripture. Have we not, in examining the teaching of the Word of God, found that it teaches precisely what the Catechism says the Bible teaches on these doctrines?

There come to our minds now a few popular misconceptions men have in regard to the judgment. It is said that the day of judgment is to be a day of twenty-four hours. That cannot be the meaning of the word "day" with reference to the judgment, because elsewhere the judgment is spoken of as taking place in an "hour." In Rev. 14: 7 an angel with a loud voice says to the dwellers of the earth, "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the *hour* of his judgment is come." What is no doubt meant in the use of these two terms is that the judgment will take place at a particular time and be a definite transaction.

There are some who hold that the day of judgment refers to a period of one thousand years. It is true the Bible says that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years (II Pet. 3: 8), but since a day is used interchangeably with an hour, we might just as well say that an hour is equal to a thousand years. If this is

impossible, so is it impossible to assert that the day spoken of as the day of judgment will be a thousand years in duration. It is not for us to draw this event out to any length nor to confine it within any period of time. We must be content with the knowledge that the time of judgment will be a unified period.

Some have supposed that the judgment takes place immediately after death. But there is nothing in the Bible to substantiate this position. There is a passage which, it is held, teaches this, but after reading it with care, it may be seen that this idea is not there at all. The passage reads thus: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9: 27). It is to be noted that we are not told that the judgment follows immediately after death. All that is asserted is that the next event after death is the judgment. That is, after death men will wait for judgment, at which time God will bring them to account.

As to the place of the judgment, it is wise to profess ignorance. It is, however, certain that we have no warrant for believing that the judgment will take place in the air. It is true I Thess. 4: 17 says, speaking of resurrected believers and those found living at Christ's coming, that they shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, but this passage tells us only of the parousia, or the coming of the Lord in the clouds of heaven to receive His own, but of the judgment there is not even a hint.

It is time for us to come to a more serious matter. Perhaps you have heard of the view that holds to more than one judgment. Were it not that there are many Christians who today hold to this view, it would not be worth while to devote time to a consideration of it.

There are some who believe in two, and some in four judgments.

The Bible knows nothing of more than one coming of the Lord and one judgment. Let us see if there be any ground for believing in more than one. In II Thess. 1: 7-10 the Apostle Paul tells us that when Christ will come to be glorified in His saints, He will take vengeance on them that know not God and punish them with everlasting destruction. It should be observed that Christ's coming means glory to the saints and the same coming means punishment to unbelievers. The very unbelievers to be punished at the coming are the ones who were troubling Christians. Not only here, but in Rom. 2: 5-8, Paul made it clear that both the good and the bad will be present in the judgment. He said, "After thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath."

When we turn to the words of our Lord in the Parable of the Tares, it is hard to see how anyone can get the notion of several judgments. He said, "Let both grow together until the harvest: . . . . I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn . . . . the tares are the children of the wicked one . . . . the harvest is the end of the world; . . . . The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom . . . . them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire. . . . .

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun" (Matt. 13: 30, 38-43).

In the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, our Lord describes what will transpire at the end of things. Listen attentively to His words: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: . . . Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (vss. 31-34, 41). Here again the good and the bad are separated in the same judgment. To comment further would be superfluous and an insult to the average intelligence.

Ah, but some one comes forward with an objection. "Do you not see," it is said, "that this judgment to which our Lord refers is a judgment of the good and bad nations and not of individuals?" Of all the foolish, ridiculous and absurd things I have heard, none is more so than this. Does our Lord teach a separate judgment for the nations? No. The tares are, according to His own words, the children of the wicked one. And what of His command to go and teach "all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"? Anyone can readily see that this is a command to make disciples of individuals. All the nations that are before Christ in judgment are nothing else than the assembled people of mankind.

But let us think a little of the absurdity and unscripturalness of this prevalent notion. If there is to be a separate judgment for the nations, then the good nations will enter into the eternal reward of Christ and the wicked nations will be cast into hell. Now, where does the Bible teach that nations are saved or destroyed as nations? Where is there a nation so good that every member will be saved? And where is there a nation that has not sinned against God? According to this theory, every nation will need to be cast into hell. And if this be so, there will be no sheep remaining to be taken over on Christ's right hand.

Furthermore, Christian people live in wicked nations—they are a part of those nations. They will also need to be cast into hell, if this view be correct. But it is said in reply to this that the righteous are saved out of the wicked nations and only the wicked people of those nations will be destroyed. But do you not see that in saying this the whole idea is given up? It is then no longer a judgment of the nations but of individuals.

The absurdity of this view is still further seen in the queer and fanciful notions that accompany it. One strange thing often heard is that the nations will be judged according to their treatment of the Jews. Many nations have not treated the Jews very kindly. At most there cannot be many nations that have treated the Jews as they should. If this is to be the basis of judgment there will not be many sheep on Christ's right hand. And what of those nations that have been kind to the Jews? Will all their other wickednesses be overlooked because they have been kind to the Jews? To say nothing more, this involves a serious overlooking and

even perversion of the doctrine of sin taught in the Bible. It also obscures the Bible doctrine of grace, for it involves an acceptance by God on the basis of meritorious works.

On what basis will men be judged? If all men are to be judged, how can Christians be included in it?

Numerous are the passages of holy Scripture which declare that God will judge all men according to their works. The Apostle Paul, in writing to Christians, said, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5: 10). In Rom. 14: 10-12 he says, "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." "Behold, I come quickly," says the Lord, "and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22: 12).

Not only will God judge all men according to their works, but in the last day He will determine their eternal condition on the basis of their attitude toward Jesus Christ. Jesus came into the world to save sinners. All who receive Him as their God and Savior are saved. All who do not trust Him, perish. Men are condemned already, we are told, because they have not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him (Matt. 7: 23; 25: 35-45; Mark 8: 38).

What is it that can be seen written plainly in these and other passages of Scripture? It is the evident truth

that even Christians are not excluded from the judgment. Certainly the lot of the ungodly will be different from the lot of the righteous in the judgment, but nevertheless the fact remains that Christians are there.

Yes, right here many difficulties arise, and we shall deal with them presently, but difficulties should not lead any true Christian to lose interest in the judgment. No matter how great the difficulty, it is a serious matter to deny any statement of God's Word. True faith takes God at His word and does not require that revealed truth conform to human understanding.

It is true that for those justified in the sight of God through the vicarious death of Jesus Christ upon the cross, the judgment will be within salvation. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Christians will not be condemned with the unbelieving world. Their eternal welfare is secure. Paul told the Corinthians that all work done by a preacher may be destroyed by fire, but he himself will be saved as a firebrand from the burning (I Cor. 3: 13-15. See also I Cor. 11: 32).

Nevertheless Paul did not look lightly upon the losses a Christian might sustain in the judgment. He said, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor. 9: 27). How could he have said this, even hypothetically, if the prospect of the judgment were a matter of indifference to him? He was not like many so-called advanced Christians who treat the judgment with an air of nonchalance. Paul knew that for the Christian the judgment could only be a matter of degrees of blessedness; yet the judgment was always for him personally a solemn matter.

In our day some Christians think that because works

cannot earn salvation and that they will be rewarded within salvation or at no peril to it, they are not to concern themselves with the day in which all accounts are to be settled. Now, if the rewards to be received were small and trifling they could indeed be indifferent to them, but it must be remembered that they will not be insignificant but great and tremendous because they will be overcast with eternity. The rewards will be eternal rewards; therefore, they will be as big as the eternal world itself. A degree of difference in a thing that has little or no value does not matter, but even a little loss in a thing of incomparable worth matters unspeakably much. In a thing that matters much there cannot help but be much concern. Indifference here is out of the question. It was out of the question for Paul, as we see in the pages of his epistles intense interest and concern that his converts should not come short in the attainment of the prize (see II Cor. 4: 15-17; Gal. 6: 9; Phil. 1: 26; 2: 16).

The joy which comes from the experience of salvation is indeed very great, but there must be a balance to that joy. A good thing may become a bad thing when it is out of control. True Christian joy is balanced by the fear of the Lord.

Have you as a Christian never trembled as well as rejoiced? Paul and the early Christians did both. Why cannot we? If we cannot, then our Christian experience is faulty indeed. The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians of the judgment seat of Christ at which they must appear, immediately added this reminder, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (II Cor. 5: 11). True the terror is for the unrighteous, but he does not exclude himself from a

knowledge of it. Into the hearts of unbelievers and believers he would instill fear of the judgment.

Now let us face the difficulties which the doctrine of a day of judgment for believers and unbelievers presents. The first difficulty is this: If a sinner is already justified by believing in Jesus Christ, why should he yet have to face the judgment? Now, if we remember one thing here it will help us. It is that the judgment will not be a private transaction as is justification. It will be a great public event. All mysteriousness and secrecy as in justification will be excluded. The judgment will be an open trial. Being a public transaction, more must be taken into account than one's personal relationship to God. The very fact that there can be disapproval of works, and yet salvation, shows that the nature of this event is different from that which takes place when God justifies the sinner (I Cor. 3: 15).

A second difficulty may also be put in the form of a question: If Christians are saved by grace alone, how can they be judged by works? For the same reason, namely, it is not a matter of salvation but of publicity. And here is what is forgotten when these difficulties present themselves: it is that the judgment is for the great purpose of vindicating God before His whole creation. God must publicly exhibit and announce the complete overthrow of sin in man. Righteousness must be magnified before the whole universe. It is in this way only that God can be vindicated in the eyes of all men. All men, without exception, must know the final verdict. Paul clearly expresses this thought when, in quoting from Ps. 51: 4, he desires with the Psalmist to see God put in the right in a formal judgment. He says, "Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings,

and mightest overcome when thou art judged" (Rom. 3: 4).

All of us as sinners will need an Advocate before the Father on the day of judgment. We cannot stand on our own merits. They are as filthy rags in His sight.

Will Christ be your advocate and plead His precious blood in your behalf? Only then shall we be safe, and if safe let us have respect unto the recompense of reward with all lowliness of mind and godly fear that we may be found blameless (see I Cor. 4:8; II Cor. 9: 6; Phil. 1: 10; Col. 3: 24).

IX

THE FINAL STATE

And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.—II TIM. 4: 18

AFTER the judgment—what?

When the judgment is finished and the books are closed, the once despised Jesus, but now the great King and Judge of all men, will say to the righteous, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25: 34). "Then," we are told, "shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13: 43). But to the wicked Jesus will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25: 41).

It is of this "kingdom" into which believers are ushered after the judgment that we shall now inquire. What could be of more interest to a soul saved by the grace of God than to know something of the end and goal of salvation!

Here we may be somewhat perplexed. Have we not heard of the kingdom of God as the present possession of the true believer in Jesus? Yes, the Apostle Paul

says, the kingdom of God is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14: 17). Thus, those already possess the kingdom of God who partake of the benefits of redemption. Even now believers are in that kingdom, for Paul says of Christians that they have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col. 1: 13). They are not only in it, but it is in them, as our Lord taught when He said, "Behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17: 21).

But while it is true that the kingdom is a present reality, it is nevertheless an outward, visible state which still lies in the future. The Bible could not speak of it as it does if anything less than this were meant. Beside speaking of it as an inheritance (Matt. 25: 39; Gal. 5: 21), and as something unto which believers are being preserved, the Scriptures speak as follows: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12: 28). "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath *promised* to them that love him?" (James 2: 5). "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1: 11).

Comment upon these passages is unnecessary. It is made unmistakably clear that there awaits the children of God an outwardly blessed existence. It will be no less an existence than the one we are experiencing now in the flesh. Jesus speaks of it as a place where there shall be eating, drinking, and reclining at table (Matt. 26:29; Luke 13:29). Of course we are not warranted in

interpreting this sensuously, yet we cannot do justice to His words if we interpret them as standing for only inward states. We cannot restrict the words in that fashion. They certainly point to outward activities. The language is figurative, to be sure, but that is because of our present inability to comprehend fully the existence of heaven. The life in heaven will resemble the life lived in the senses but on a higher plane. It will be a life of blessedness into which believers will really and actually enter (Matt. 7: 14;18: 8-9; 25: 46; Mark 10: 30).

What will make the heavenly state so blessed? We cannot conceive of blessedness in heaven for a sinful creature apart from the favor of God. When our first parents were created and placed in the Garden of Eden, they had the divine favor. This constituted their bliss. But it was lost when they sinned against God. Not only did they lose the favor of God but we have lost it as well. We sinned and fell with them. Instead of God's favor we have only His wrath and sore displeasure. But those who have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ have been brought into God's good pleasure. God is reconciled to them and they are now free from condemnation (Rom. 8: 1). What joy this truth brings to the heart of the Christian, but how much more will this mean when they see the Savior face to face!

No longer alienated from the life of God, Christians will live unto Him and in Him (Eph. 4: 18). Then there will be perfect communion. It will be a life that will ever be with the Lord. Never for a moment will it be apart from Him. The redeemed are sons of God now, but still they are not the sons they ought to be. Then their sonship will be perfect. "Beloved, now are

we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3: 2).

We often wonder how much we shall know in that blessed kingdom. God has indeed prepared things for them that love Him, but how impossible it is for an earthly creature fully to conceive of them. Paul speaks of things the ear has not heard, the eye has not seen, and what has not yet entered into the heart of man (I Cor. 2: 9-10). It is true he has in mind the revelation of God which is now known to the Christian man but one may apply them to those things which lie in store. The same apostle speaks of a vision of the Lord, of being caught up into paradise, and hearing unspeakable words, but he found it difficult to speak of them in the present life. He felt it was even unlawful for him to speak about them (II Cor. 12: 2-4).

But because the bliss of heaven is indescribable, it does not mean that the future state of the righteous will be without knowledge. Knowledge is certainly essential for every Christian, so much so that salvation is conditioned upon it. No normal adult person is saved apart from knowledge of the way of salvation. A man must know who Christ is and what He did on the cross to be saved. Paul declares in Eph. 4: 17-20 that the perversions of paganism are due to religious ignorance on account of sin. Because men's hearts are hardened, they walk in the vanity of their minds and have darkened understandings. Thus it is because men are sinners that they are religiously ignorant and, being so, they are alienated from the life of God. Every true religious life, then, must reflect the mind of God. What God has revealed concerning Himself must be known.

Now, if knowledge of the things of God is essential in this life for salvation, how much more will those know who shall be partakers of the heavenly life? We can only say in exclamation, "How much more!" To attempt to describe them is beyond us in this earthly existence. We must wait until we enter within the portals of heaven when we shall know even as we are known.

How often are Christians wont to speak of the life in heaven as one of glory! They are warranted in so speaking of it from Scripture. Paul says, "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for *glory* and honor and immortality, eternal life" (Rom. 2: 7). As sinners we have come short of the glory of God, but those who have been justified through faith "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5: 2). That God will glorify His redeemed children, Paul says in Rom. 8: 30, is as certain as if it had already been accomplished.

What is this state of glory? Is it some creaturely radiance in which the saints will shine? No, for no creature possesses a radiance all its own. The believer will not shine in his own light, but the glory which God possesses will be reflected in him. In this way the believer's completeness in Christ and acceptance with God will be shown forth. Even these bodies will reflect God's glory, for we are told they will be raised in glory (I Cor. 11: 43). With the beauty of the Lord God shining upon the saints, how beautiful will they be!

Even the many things held in store for the children of God which they do not yet see, hear, or conceive will have their value only because God's glory is upon them. Nothing that we shall possess will be anything because we possess them, but because God's excellence will over-

shadow them. That is why they will be so inconceivably grand.

It goes without saying that in the final state there will be no more sorrow or sin. Nothing of the frailness and corruption of the sinful can exist with Him who is absolutely perfect. Then death will be swallowed up in victory and the body of sin will be delivered from all those things that have in this life made it to groan and sigh.

Now, the life and the glory of heaven will be the portion of the blessed eternally. When the Scriptures speak of the future and final abode of the righteous as "eternal life," they mean that all that they will possess will be without end. They will have them in God forever and ever. That is what the word "eternal," or "everlasting" means. It can mean nothing else but absolute endlessness.

But how can it be that we mortal creatures of space and time can become such that we shall live forever? Is not God alone the eternal One? Paul says, God "only hath immortality dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto" (I Tim. 6: 18). We, on the other hand, can never be eternal. And since this is so, who can tell but that there will at some point be an end to our bliss? Blessed be God, we need not fear. He has promised to impart to our life as creatures a reflection of His eternity. We shall be taken into the realm of His habitation. Of His own free grace He has appointed those whom He has called from all eternity to an incorruptible prize (Rom. 2: 7).

Thus while believers will never possess the attribute of eternity, since that can belong to God alone, yet believers will be immune to death because God confers

His gifts upon them unceasingly. The Second Adam will dwell in them as a quickening Spirit. This is the same Spirit who dwells in the human nature of the Lord. No more can He be removed from believers than He can be removed from the human nature of Christ.

And we are to be mindful of the promise of the Lord Jesus Himself, who not only promised eternal life, but eternal life without reservation (John 11: 25). Paul also is persuaded that neither death nor life, nor any of the demonic principalities, nor any creature will be able to separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8: 39).

Every person who is made partaker of the resurrection will have his mortality swallowed up of life (II Cor. 5: 4). How can the heavenly life of the believer be in any way insecure when his life is hid with Christ in God? It will be as secure as Christ's life, and what can be more secure than that?

Because of the intimate and vital union that exists between the believer and Christ, the two can never be separated. As His life was, even in death, incapable of ever being dissolved, so He has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (Heb. 7: 16; II Tim. 1: 10).

How beautiful is the picture given to us in the Revelation of the heavenly state, the kingdom of God, into which those shall enter who have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ! As we listen to the words which describe it, are they not the nearest we can come to the actual scene in heaven? Until we experience the glory and bliss of the redeemed, we must be content with these words: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and be their

God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21: 3-4). And we can only further sing:

We know not, oh we know not,
What joys await us there;
What radiancy of glory,
What bliss beyond compare.

Happy is the man who can rest through faith in this wonderful revelation of God in the final state of the blessed. There are some people, however, who are not content with God's disclosure of heaven. They must add or take away. Many are not willing to lay down their armor and rest finally in God. They want to take up arms and conquer unknown worlds. They seem to want to repeat this life over again in the next. But Christians ought so to live with Christ in this life as to desire nothing further than to be with Him.

We turn now from the contemplation of the blessed to those who will hear the pronouncement of condemnation at the judgment. The Scriptures are plain. We are told they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (II Thess. 1:9). Let us see what this means. It is "everlasting destruction" that awaits the wicked. We have seen that when the Scriptures use the word "everlasting," or "eternal," of the life of the redeemed in heaven, it means a life that will never end. The destruction here held out to the ungodly is then a destruction that likewise will have no end. It would be no threat at all to tell the persecutors of Christians

that they would be annihilated, as some suppose. This is farthest from the mind of Paul. Rather Paul makes a sharp contrast between the destiny of believers and unbelievers. And this very sharpness would be obliterated by the insertion of an idea of annihilation, which is foreign to the Bible.

There is cold comfort given in the Bible to those who would seek in it support for the idea of annihilation of the wicked. But if they can get no comfort from the words everlasting and eternal, they seek refuge in the words "destroy" and "kill." Yet these words cannot possibly have the idea of annihilation in them according to Bible usage. When Jesus said, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10: 28), He did not mean that to destroy body and soul in hell was to annihilate them. If this is the way the word "destroy" is interpreted, then the word "kill" must have the same sense, for the two terms are used in apposition to each other. Now, did Jesus mean to say that in killing the body it is annihilated? Just a little careful attention given to words will help anyone who is sincere in handling the Scriptures. The fact is that when the body is killed it does not cease to be, and Jesus speaking as He did had no idea like this in mind. In another place Jesus said, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth" (John 6: 27). In saying this He did not convey the notion that meat ceases to be. Peter also speaks of gold that *perisheth* in contrast with the trial of faith which is more precious (I Pet. 1: 7). In saying this he is not conveying the thought that gold will cease to exist.

Anyone who will face what the Bible actually says

cannot deny that Jesus and His apostles taught unceasing retribution. The punishment of the wicked will be literally eternal. Jesus said again, "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell" (Matt. 5:29). He speaks of "the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched" (Mark 9: 43-44). It must be remembered that these words fell from the lips of the good and merciful Savior. What awful words they are, from such an One!

And from these words of Christ and His apostles true believers in all ages have held that the conscious existence of the soul after the death of the body is unending; that there is no repentance or reformation in the future world; that those who leave this life unreconciled to God remain forever in a state of alienation and therefore are forever sinful and miserable.

Oh, I know well how the natural heart revolts from and struggles against this doctrine. But we must believe it if we are not to renounce faith in the Bible altogether and give up all the hopes of blessedness founded upon its promises.

This doctrine was not a welcome doctrine when Christ and His apostles preached it, yet they fearlessly made it known to men. If we preach what men think is right we would need to cease preaching the doctrine of the cross, for this is a stumbling-block to the Jew and foolishness to the Greek. It is not for us to make a gospel, but to declare that gospel which has been made known to us in the Holy Scriptures. How well it would be if all who call themselves Christians should learn that it is not their business to believe and teach what

they may think true or right but what God in His Holy Word has seen fit to reveal.

Remember, then, regardless of what the natural heart may want, that if you be in an unpardoned state, the pain and torments of hell await you forever and ever. O sinner, can you hear your doom and see the anguish and torments of the damned and know that you will be in that state and still be unrepentant?

Pray for God's mercy. Seek His forgiveness through the grace which He offers you in Christ Jesus. He died to reconcile you to God. If you come to Him, He will not turn you away, but will give you a place among that sanctified throng which shall sing the praises of Him who loved them and gave Himself for them forever.

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